

# *Hope this Meets You — in Good Health —*

The Newsletter of the ISKCON Health and Welfare Ministry



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## FROM THE MINISTER

As the new millennium approaches, there are many anxieties and fears about problems and natural catastrophes. Y2K computer failures, global earth changes and dangerous new diseases name only a few of the varieties of miseries expected. Such problems may result, however, in the way of life for many people on this planet becoming simpler. For instance, many modern amenities are manufactured at the cost of violating the laws of material nature and exploiting nature's resources. This has resulted in increased contamination of the earth, water, air and the minds and lives of the residents of this planet. Thus in the name of material advancement the quality of life on this planet has actually been reduced. Perhaps less electricity, less chemicals, less radioactivity, less pollution will ultimately help real progress.

As Srila Prabhupada has said:

"Grains and vegetables can sumptuously feed a man and animals, and a fatty cow delivers enough milk to supply a man sumptuously with vigor and vitality. If there is enough milk, enough grains, enough fruit, enough cotton, enough silk and enough jewels, then why do the people need cinemas, houses of prostitution, slaughterhouses, etc.? What is the need of an artificial luxurious life of cinema, cars, radio, flesh and hotels? Has this civilization produced anything but quarreling individually and nationally? Has this civilization enhanced the cause of equality and fraternity by sending thousands of men into a hellish factory and the war fields at the whims of a particular man?" (Srimad Bhagavatam 1.10.4 purport)

Let us hope that the next millennium will usher in a greater respect for the resources the planet earth is providing us and thus a healthier more satisfying lifestyle which can help us to make progress in Krsna consciousness and devotional service to the Supreme Lord.

Prahladananda Swami

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## Hope This Meets You — in Good Health —

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Issue No. 5

January 1999

**Srila Prabhupada on Health** 3

**Reduction and Tonification** 5

Keeping the body clean inside as well as out . . . . .  
by Prahladananda Swami

**Ayurveda and Longevity** 7

How to live a long and Krsna Conscious life . . . . .  
by Kaviraj Partap S. Chauhan

**My Favourite Medicines** 10

Some simple health solutions for us all . . . . .  
by Padmanabha dasa

**How important is Calcium for the body?** 14

Acidosis - The hidden cause of many health problems  
by Ugresa dasa

**Kitchen Cleanliness** 18

The importance of being *suci* in Krsna's kitchen .  
by Kurma dasa

**Vastu Shastra** 21

Vedic Living . . . . . by  
Rama Prasada dasa and Raga Manjari devi dasi

**News from Around the World** 29

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# Srila Prabhupada on Health

## Splash water for high fever

According to Ayur-vedic treatment, it is said that if one has a high fever, someone should splash him with water after gargling this water. In this way the fever subsides. Although Bharata Maharaja was very aggrieved due to the separation of his so-called son, the deer, he thought that the moon was splashing gargled water on him from its mouth and that this water would subdue his high fever, which was raging due to separation from the deer.

(Srimad Bhagavatam 5.8.25 purport)

## Avoid overeating

Yet they must take a lesson from the life of Bharata Maharaja to be very cautious and to see that not a single moment is wasted in frivolous talk, sleep or voracious eating. Eating is not prohibited, but if we eat voraciously we shall certainly sleep more than required. Sense gratification ensues, and we may be degraded to a lower life form. In that way our spiritual progress may be checked at least for the time being.

(Srimad Bhagavatam 5.8.29 purport)

## Anxiety creates disease

So how these people, during the time of Maharaja Yudhisthira, were free from all kinds of anxieties and diseases? *Nadhayo vyadhyah klesah*. If you are in anxiety, then that will create a disease. Our this psychological condition, physiological condition, is working in so subtle way—little shocking, little disturbance will create another disturbance. The Ayurvedic medicine, they treat patients on this principle, how things are disturbed. ...

So if people remain completely in hygienic principle, as they are prescribed in the sastras, just like rise early in the morning, take bath, evacuate and chant Hare Krsna mantra... If you follow the rules and regulation, then there will be no anxiety, no disease. People become crazy when he is full of anxieties or disease. If he is happy in every respect, then he does not become crazy, he does not become enemy. If everyone is satisfied, then where is the chance of becoming your enemy or my enemy? Everyone is satisfied.

(Srimad-Bhagavatam 1.10.6 Mayapura, June 21, 1973)

## Sympathetic

We should be very much sympathetic. If some of our fellow men fall sick, we must take care of him, give help him. Be-

cause, after all, we have got this body. Sometimes we may fall sick. So one, we should be sympathetic.

(Srimad Bhagavatam 02.03 13-14 lecture LA May 1972)

## Healthy life means to become God conscious

Prabhupada: Now, healthy, what do you mean by healthy?

Father Tanner: Well, you know, you were saying it's what a man does that makes him that if he is pure here and now, then, and it's not his inside. It's his outside...

Prabhupada: Our description of healthy life, healthy life is to become God conscious. That is healthy life. Otherwise do you think that an animal like elephant, very strong, does it mean that it is healthy? No.

Father Tanner: No, I would say an elephant can be healthy, my body can be healthy.

Prabhupada: Well, that is temporary. Everyone is subjected to death. So you may be very strong, healthy, but you cannot avoid death.

Father Tanner: No, but then, then...

Prabhupada: So, so therefore, ultimately, you become so-called healthy or not healthy, you'll die. That is the fact. So we do not want that kind of healthy life. Our proposition is that we go back to home back to Godhead and remain with God, eternally enjoying blissful



life. This is our healthy life.

(Room Conversation with Father Tanner and other guests — July 11, 1973, London)

## Health Comes First

One month, one year, whatever it takes. Disease, fire and debt are never to be neglected. Once in Bhubanesvara Gargamuni told Srila Prabhupada that he had recently been very ill in Nepal. As a result he had gone down to Gopalpur on the Orissan coast for a two week break from his GBC duties to rest and recuperate. Srila Prabhupada fully approved and told him that health comes first because if you aren't healthy you can't do any service.

(From Hari Sauri prabhu)

Tamala Krsna: His idea is that if one receives a mantra from a spiritual master, if the spiritual master is not bona fide...

Prabhupada: Then there is no question of mantra. There is no

*Hope this Meets You  
— in Good Health—*



question of worshipping Deity. These are all bogus things. If you are not... Just like here is a young medical man. If he has not received instruction from a bona fide medical college, so what is the value of his medical, being... That is... What is called? What is the technical name?

Devotee (4): Quack.

Prabhupada: Quack! (laughter) (pronounces like "quark")

Devotees: Quack.

Prabhupada: A quack is not a medical man, however he may show all red bottles, white bottles. There is a Bengali proverb, *naj jal yac curi tini ei daktar*. One stethoscope, *naj*, and some bottles, *jala*, and talking all nonsense, he becomes a doctor. That means the quack doctor, not a... Qualified doctor, he knows what is what. So *naj jal yac curi tini ei daktar*. In Bengali they say. And mostly in villages they go on like that. But of course, they have got some experience. I know in Allahabad there was a doctor, Kabhir, a Dr. Kabhir. And because in my previous household life I was a chemist and druggist, I was supplying medicine, so he was my customer. So he had that... This Dr. Kabhir was a compounder. Later on he practiced. So he had very, very big prac... He was my biggest customer. He was purchasing medicine like anything. But he had experience. He learned from an experienced doctor. He cannot be called a bogus, because whatever he learned, he was... But generally, one who is not a bona fide doctor, he is called a quack. So anything, experience required, not that you have to go to the medical college. If you are trained under a bona fide doctor, then also you can get the quality of a doctor.

(Srimad Bhagavatam 6.1.41-42—Surat, December 23, 1970)

#### **Eat nice nutritious food, keep good health**

Prabhupada: We have no other business. We want to see people live, eating very nicely nutritious food, keeping good health. But unnecessarily artificial things, bothering, that we don't want. Keep your health very nice, live for as many years as possible, and be Krsna conscious. Then, next life, you go back

to home, back to Godhead, permanent life. *Yad gatva na nivartante*. This we want to give. There is no cheating. There is no politics, no personal ambition fulfilling. This is our mission.

#### **Glorious death**

Prabhupada: Hm. *Krsna tvadiya-pada-pankaja-panjarantam adyaiva visatame manasa-raja-hamsah, prana-prayana...* Ordinary dying, kapha-pitta-vayu: "*Ghara ghara ghar*," choking and... But in the kirtana if we die, oh, it is so successfully... Injection, operation... Who needs it? That atmosphere death and krsna-kirtana death? Glorious death. Oxygen gas... (laughs) Dying and so much trouble. Never call. Please accept my request. Chant Hare Krsna, bas, and let me die peacefully. Never be disturbed, call doctor-no. Chant Hare Krsna. Go on chanting. Chanting, hearing, chanting. You have got so much material. (Conversation: May 27, 1977, Vrindavana)

#### **Quick treatment**

Tamala Krsna: Okay. Another thing I see on account of the fast. One of the reasons perhaps... One of the advantages of fasting is that the swelling is... Fast-ing cures diseases.

Prabhupada: Diet treatment is very good.

Tamala Krsna: That's a difficult treatment for the Westerners. Because they have no self-...

Prabhupada: They want to be cured immediately. Go to the doctor. "Give me injection, give me tablet, cure me immediately." That is the Western treatment. Immediately stop it. Here also. A man, a worker, he's earning twenty rupees a day, and the doctors also take advantage of this rational. "You want to be treated quickly or let...?" And naturally he will say "Quickly." "Then you have to take injection." Injection means each injection at least five rupees. He may inject water.

(Room Conversation April 10, 1977, Bombay)

#### **Advanced spiritually—no Suffering from Disease**

Prabhupada: Actually spiritual consciousness keeps the body fit. Just like

in the body the spirit soul is there and the consciousness is also there, maybe polluted, but as soon as the spirit soul gives up this body, the body immediately begins to decompose. So the decomposition of the body is checked by the spiritual presence. So if you become advanced in spiritual consciousness there is no question of suffering from bodily disease.

Bhagavad-gita 2.14—Mexico, February 14, 1975

#### **Food in the Mode of Goodness**

This verse is very significant for those desiring to elevate themselves to a higher level of Krsna consciousness. When a person is initiated by a spiritual master, he changes his habits and does not eat undesirable eatables or engage in the eating of meat, the drinking of liquor, illicit sex or gambling. Sattvika-ahara, foodstuffs in the mode of goodness, are described in the sastras as wheat, rice, vegetables, fruits, milk, sugar, and milk products. Simple food like rice, dhal, capatis, vegetables, milk and sugar constitute a balanced diet, but sometimes it is found that an initiated person, in the name of prasada, eats very luxurious foodstuffs. Due to his past sinful life he becomes attracted by Cupid and eats good food voraciously. It is clearly visible that when a neophyte in Krsna consciousness eats too much, he falls down. Instead of being elevated to pure Krsna consciousness, he becomes attracted by Cupid. The so-called brahmachari becomes agitated by women, and the vanaprastha may again become captivated into having sex with his wife. Or he may begin to search out another wife.

(SB4.26.13)

#### **Undesirable Food**

To live within this material world, one must face many dangers, as described herein. For example, undesirable food poses a danger to health, and therefore one must give up such food. The Dhanvantari incarnation can protect us in this regard. Since Lord Visnu is the Supersoul of all living entities, if He likes He can save us from adhibhautika disturbances, disturbances from other

*Please turn to page 9 . . .*



# Reduction and Tonification

by Prahladananda Swami

**A**s an example to encourage his disciples to take care of their health, Srila Prabhupada once cited in a letter an incident in the life of Sanatana Goswami.

While on his way to meet Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu in Jagannatha Puri, Sanatana Goswami traveled through the Jharikhanda forest and had contacted a skin disease that oozed pus. When at Jagannatha Puri Lord Caitanya used to embrace Sanatana Goswami. Unfortunately the pus from the Goswami's body would ooze unto the body of the Lord. Thinking that he was offending Lord Caitanya, the Goswami wanted to commit suicide. Lord Caitanya, however, learning of the plan told the Goswami that he did not approve of it. He told him that his body already belonged to the Lord and should not be destroyed or used whimsically.

In ayurveda there are many definitions of health, but the following aspects of health are important:

One should have the proper amount of energy in order to do one's work. Too much energy, especially moving in the wrong directions or in the wrong parts of the body can make for hyperexcitability, nervousness, tension and other disturbances. Too little energy can make for depression, inactivity, weakness and other types of physical and emotional lack physical and mental power. The right amount of energy used in the right way is characteristic of the mode of goodness, which is most conducive to spiritual progress.

The senses, mind, intelligence and the soul should be working in harmony. Our activities, our desires, our understanding and our spiritual aspirations should be working together for a common purpose.

The doshas, vata, pitta, and kapha\*\* should be balanced according to the balance which was present at the

time of birth (*prakrti*), and remedies to balance the tendency for imbalance enviably caused by the (*vrkrti*) which manifests due to the factors of age, climate, season and other unavoidable associations.

Elimination of the bodily wastes (*malas* such as sweat, urine and faeces) should be regular and timely.

The spiritual aspirations of the devo-



tee should dominate over other necessities and desires that arise due to material association. Chakra, the author of the Chakra Samhita and one of the origi-

***The spiritual aspirations of the devotee should dominate over other necessities and desires that arise due to material association.***

nal authorities on ayurveda, declares that a person can't be truly healthy unless he is also spiritually advanced. Unchecked and unregulated material desires will lead to prajnaparadha or violating the laws of material nature and the subsequent diseases and problems caused by the three fold miseries.\*\*

The basic supporting structures of the body which govern the physiology of the body called the *dhatu*s (lymph,

blood, fat, flesh, bone, marrow and reproductive tissues) and their assessor tissues are properly formed and their wastes are timely eliminated.

If there are imbalances to these systems and energies in the bodies the result is that sufficient energy will not be supplied to the cells and the wastes of the cells will not be eliminated.

In the treatment of disease and the restoration of health a two-fold process is employed called reduction (*langhana*) and tonification (*brimhana*). *Langhana* means to make light and *brimhana* means to make heavy. Reduction therapy is to eliminate unwanted toxins (*ama*) from the digestive tract and tissues. This allows the proper flow of the energies in the body's metabolic pathways so that the nutrients, which are formed after the process of digestion, can nourish the tissues and the cells of the body. Generally after reduction therapy is completed, tonification therapy is used to restore the body's strength and vitality.

Reduction is indicated at the acute stage of a disease and reduces the toxins and excessive doshas from the body so that the energies of the body may flow properly. Reduction can also be used to prevent deep seated toxins from disturbing the body in the future.

Rejuvenation therapies are usually applied after the toxins and excessive doshas are eliminated from the body.

These therapies build up the *dhatu*s and energy in the body so that not

only the body may work efficiently but also that higher consciousness may be developed toward the mode of goodness if not spiritual awakening.

The doshas have specific sites from where they can be eliminated. For Vata the site of elimination is the large intestine, for Pitta, the small intestine and for Kapha, the stomach.

Reduction therapy has two parts: palliation and purification. Palliation

*Hope this Meets You  
— in Good Health—*



(*Shamana*) loosens the toxins from the tissues and reduces them. It also builds up the digestive fire and cleanses the gastrointestinal tract. Before purification is used, generally there is a period of palliation therapy, and then again after purification therapy is applied, another therapy is applied to balance the body's doshas and restore the digestive fire. Then tonification therapy is

***The right amount of energy used in the right way is characteristic of the mode of goodness, which is most conducive to spiritual progress.***

usually administered. Palliation therapy has seven parts: Fasting from water, fasting from food, herbs and spices to loosen and burn the toxins, herbs and spices for digestion, Sun bathing, exposure to wind, and exercise.

In purification therapy (*Panca Karma*), first it is necessary to get the toxins and doshas to flow to their respective sites of elimination in the gastrointestinal tract. This is done by oil massage (*Snehana*) and sweating therapies (*Svedana*). Eliminating them from the gastrointestinal tract is then done by the five *Karmas*. . . To eliminate Kapha the strong therapy, vomiting is required, to eliminate Vata a mild therapy of enemas is required and for Pitta a moderate therapy is required, purgation.

It is unique feature of Ayurveda that it not only flushes out toxins from the organs, but it also has a system of guiding them to the sites where they can be removed from the body. In this way, they will not be deposited again in some other tissues in the body.

When the patient is strong and the disease is weak, purification therapy is indicated; when the disease is strong, but the patient is weak then palliation therapy is indicated. When the toxins and aggravated doshas are in the gastrointestinal tract, purification methods can be used; otherwise, first palliation therapy is used so that the toxins and aggravated doshas can be brought to

their respective places for elimination.

*Panca Karma* is an art and generally must be administered under professional care. Many factors have to be considered such as: the disease, strength and age of the patient, the season, the proper combination and order of therapies. This requires an expert doctor, nurse, and proper medical facilities. Done whimsically it may not produce the desired results or the patient may even be harmed.

Some simple tests to see the current toxicity of our body is to examine our tongue in the morning. If the tongue is pink and clear, the body is free from ama and toxins. If the tongue is coated, or a color other than pink, such as red or yellowish, the body's has toxins. Another test is to check the stools in the morning. If the stools sink, have a bad aroma or if they contain undigested food, this is a symptom that the digestion is not working optimally. The stools should be light brown and the consistency of a ripe banana. The urine should also be clear and the color of beer. Nausea or weakness of the limbs is another sign of the presence of impurities in the body.

The root cause of toxins building up in the body is a weak, too strong or irregular fire of digestion. To bring the fire of digestion back into balance skipping a meal or two might help. This gives the fire of digestion a rest and also allows it to digest any accumulation of ama in the body. If the problem is more severe a juice fast for three days might be beneficial. A fast on fruit juice or lemon and water is recommended. If this is too difficult fruit can be eaten, but not grains or vegetables. After three days boiled vegetables, vegetable juices or soups can be eaten. After six days of such fasting the regular diet can be resumed; however, white flour products, fried foods, cold milk and sweets should be avoided. If the problem is more chronic, visit a competent physician.

If we try to build on a shaky foundation, the building can not maintain for long. Therefore if we want to build our strength and vitality to perform devotional service to the Lord it should be based on a internally and externally clear and well functioning body.

## Footnotes

\*I am very much anxious to know how is your present condition of health. Please let me know if you are improving or if there is some disturbance still. We should always remember that our body is not for sense gratification; it is for Krishna's service only. And to render very good sound service to Krishna we should not neglect the upkeep of the body. We learn from an instance of Sanatana Goswami. He was sometimes very much sick on account of eczema, and he was therefore sometimes bleeding. But whenever Lord Caitanya met Sanatana Goswami, He used to embrace him in spite of Sanatana's request for Him not to touch him. Because of this, Sanatana Goswami later on decided to commit suicide so Lord Caitanya would not embrace him in his bloody condition. This plan was understood by Lord Caitanya, and He called Sanatana Goswami and said to him, "you have decided to end this body, but don't you know that this body belongs to Krishna? You have already dedicated your body to Krishna so how can you decide to end it?" So you must not neglect the upkeep of your body. This is the lesson we get from Lord Caitanya and Sanatana Goswami. Try to take care of your health

***The root cause of toxins building up in the body is a weak, too strong or irregular fire of digestion.***

in the best possible way.

**\*\*Primordial energies:**

Vata—governs all movements within the body, such as breathing.

Pitta—governs all transformations within the body such as digestion.

Kapha—governs all the structures within the body such as the organs.

**\*\*\*Adhyatmic—pertaining to the body and mind**

Adhidaivic—pertaining to natural disturbances like earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes.

Adhibhautic—pertaining to other living entities like biting insects. ❧



# Ayurveda and Longevity

by Kaviraj Partap S. Chauhan

In recent years Ayurveda has gained tremendous popularity all over the world. People today are looking for a system that allows minimum intake of chemicals, since the side effects and reactions of chemical medicines are becoming known to everyone. For this reason alternative health-care systems are becoming more and more popular. Ayurveda, which is a complete health maintenance system, including optimization of health as well as prevention and cure of diseases, can be the best alternative system to meet today's medical needs.

A natural harmony between the Ayurvedic principles and the human structure is the main reason for its effectiveness. This concept of natural harmony, however, is somewhat missing in modern medical science. Therefore, despite having the most advanced technology and science, people in the modern age are becoming sicker and sicker, both physically and mentally.

Problems like mental stress, anxiety, depression, and nervous debility have become very common. Such problems, which are related to the mind, have a deep impact on various aspects of a person's life. Although improvements in the health-care system have resulted in an increase in the average life span, peace of mind, which is essential for

happiness, has decreased.

A long life full of anxiety and depression is no fun. The increase in such mental problems is the reason why suicide rates in some of the most techno-

means achieving a complete balance in body, mind, and soul and then living a long life. Without this balance, a person cannot enjoy the real benefit of longevity, which is to attain a state of per-

manent happiness and peace. This state is different from the modern concept of happiness, for in this case the goal of longevity is not only to satisfy the physical aspirations but also to fulfill the needs of the mind and the soul. In Sanskrit, the term *dirgha-ayu* is used for longevity. There is a whole section in the *Caraka Samhita* (an authorized textbook on Ayurveda) that explains how to attain *dirgha-ayu*. There *Caraka* clearly states that one should try to achieve longevity so that one can engage in spiritual activities and attain liberation. This becomes clear from the following explanation found in *Caraka Samhita*.

## The Principles of Ayurveda

According to the *Caraka Samhita*, Ayurveda primarily

deals with the following topics:

*hitahitam duhkham sukham*

*ayustasya hituhitam*

*manum ca tacca yatrokta ayurveda  
sa uccyate*

1. *Hitayu* and *ahitayu*: Beneficial and unbeneficial ways of living (related to the individual and society)

2. *Sukhayu* and *dukhayu*: Happy and



logically advanced countries have risen. In the modern age people want to live a long life to increase their material enjoyment, but this is not the goal of life. Therefore we see that many who live long lives simply suffer more because material enjoyment ultimately leads to suffering. Ayurveda, however, teaches that longevity has a different purpose.

Longevity, according to Ayurveda,

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— in Good Health—*



unhappy ways of living (related to the individual)

3. What is good or bad for us in our lives.

4. The *manam*, or span of life.

#### **Beneficial and Unbeneficial ways of living**

Beneficial activities refer to those that benefit both the individual and society.

***According one's personal constitution and the particular season, the Ayurveda recommends rules, life-styles, and diets that are good for life and keep one healthy. Ignoring such instructions is bad for life and health.***

These include activities that do not disturb the natural balance of the body and society. Such activities include speaking the truth, being nonviolent, loving all creatures, and respecting elders. Other important qualities a person should cultivate include the power of examining the ramifications of actions before doing them, freedom from the desire to cheat, a good memory and intellect, and control of passion, envy, greed, and anger.

Unbeneficial ways of living refer to those practices that tend toward selfishness, greed, exploitation of other individuals, pollution of the environment, etc. The Ayurveda advises us to follow the beneficial path so that happiness and peace prevail for both the individual and society.

#### **Happy and unhappy life (*sukhayu* and *duhkhayu*)**

Everyone is striving to be happy; no one wants to be unhappy. Yet we find so much unhappiness around us because people do not actually know what will bring them true, long-lasting happiness. A state of complete balance in bodily functions, mind, and soul is necessary for real happiness. Among the

factors the Ayurveda says lead to happiness are freedom from disease, along with youthfulness, vitality, strength, determination, will power, peace of mind, perfect sense organs, the material facilities to live comfortably, and the ability to achieve what one desires.

Although people might attain some of these qualities, it is rare that they attain them through their own efforts.

#### **Things good or bad for life**

In addition, the Ayurveda describes what is good or bad for life. According one's personal constitution and the particular season, the Ayurveda recommends rules, life-styles, and diets that are good for life and keep one healthy. Ignoring such instructions is bad for life and health. Many other instructions deal with proper food combining, proper eating habits, proper exercise, proper and timely cleansing of metabolic wastes from the body, following a proper diet and regimen during sickness, and eating the proper quality and quantity of food. All these factors are directly responsible for a good or bad state of life.

#### ***Manam of Ayu (The Span of Life)***

The Ayurveda elaborately explains certain signs that indicate how long a patient will live. As mentioned earlier, one chapter of the Caraka Samhita explains how to attain *dirgha-ayu*, or longevity.

#### **The Ayurveda and the four basic goals of life:**

The Ayurveda teaches that there are four basic goals of human life: 1. *Dharma* (religion) 2. *Artha* (economy) 3. *Kama* (sense pleasure) 4. *Moksha* (liberation)

To fulfill these basic goals, one has to be in good health.

*dharmartha-kama-mokshanam  
arogyam mulam uttamam  
rogastasyapahartarah shreyaso  
jivitasya ca*  
(Charaka Samhita 1.15)

"*Arogya* (the state of good health) is the supreme basis for achieving the goals of *dharma* (religion), *artha*

(economy), *kama* (sense pleasure), and *moksha* (liberation). Disease destroys *arogyas* (health) along with the ultimate goal and one's very life."

The Ayurvedic texts clearly state that *arogyas* (the state of good health) is the most important, as nothing can be achieved in this world without good health. The body is the vehicle on which one rides to his destination. If the body is weak or sick, one cannot function properly to achieve the goals of life. Therefore it is very important to attain and maintain good health.

Ayurveda is the science that provides knowledge about how to attain health and longevity. It explains a number of diets and regimens for healthy people. In addition, it explains permanent cures for most acute and chronic diseases. Therefore Ayurveda is the basis of life in both the healthy and diseased states of an individual. For practicing any kind of activity, one has to relate to Ayurveda for keeping good health.

***Other important qualities a person should cultivate include the power of examining the ramifications of actions before doing them, freedom from the desire to cheat, a good memory and intellect, and control of passion, envy, greed, and anger.***

#### **How to achieve longevity:**

In the Susruta Samhita, health is defined as follows:

*sama dosha samagnis ca samadhatu  
malakriya prasannatmendriya mana  
swastha ity abhidhiyate.*  
(Su. su 15/41)

According to the above definition, a person is said to be healthy when all



three doshas, the seven *dhatu*s (body tissues), all thirteen *agnis* (fires or enzymes), and all the *malakriyas* (excretory functions), are balanced. In addition, the soul, mind, and senses must be in a state of complete happiness.

According to Ayurveda, health is not merely the absence of physical disease; it requires a happy mind and soul, too. This subtle aspect of the self is often neglected, which results in unhealthiness. For example, sometimes we see a person who has no physical problems yet is suffering from depression, anxiety, and stress. Such a person is unhealthy and cannot enjoy life, and may very well live a shortened life. Thus Ayurveda teaches that a complete balance in body, mind, soul, and senses is necessary for longevity.

Now it becomes clear how the modern view of health and longevity differs from that of Ayurveda. Good nutrition, vitamin and mineral supplements, and

soul, and senses so that they may all function in balance.

#### **Factors necessary to achieve longevity**

As we have seen, a state of complete balance in body, mind, soul, and senses is needed to achieve longevity. Some simple factors necessary to achieve this state are mentioned below.

##### **1. Possessing good quality of ojas:**

*Ojas* is a vital fluid essential for good health. It is like the body's immune system. Ayurveda advocates that one should always possess a good quality of *ojas* in the body. Following a *sattvik* diet and life-style is essential for maintaining a good quality of *ojas* in the body. Practicing celibacy or controlled sex is also necessary for a good quality of *ojas* because indulgence in sex reduces the quantity of *shukra-dhatu* (reproductive fluid) in the body, which affects the quantity and quality of *ojas*.

##### **2. Proper diet**

Eating the proper quantity and quality of food is another important factor for achieving longevity. "Eat less and live longer" is a very common saying, which has recently been accepted even by the modern scientists. Eating according to the strength of the *jatharagni* (digestive fire) stops the formation of *ama*, a toxic material that arises from undigested food. According to Ayurveda, *ama* is the root cause of most diseases. The quality of food here also refers to *sattvik* foods.

##### **3. Sleep**

"Sleep is the diet of the mind." Proper regulated sleep is necessary for achieving good health and longevity. Six to seven hours of sound sleep is necessary for maintaining good health and longevity. One should avoid sleeping during the daytime.

#### **4. Yoga and Meditation**

Regular physical exercise (Ayurveda teaches that yoga is the best exercise), practicing controlled breathing exercises (*pranayama*), and meditation (chanting holy mantras) are also very important for achieving longevity.

It is now clear that purpose of achieving longevity is not to enjoy one's senses but to help one attain liberation,

***According to Ayurveda, health is not merely the absence of physical disease; it requires a happy mind and soul, too.***

which is possible only by becoming God conscious.

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***Ayurveda, which is a complete health maintenance system, including optimization of health as well as prevention and cure of diseases, can be the best alternative system to meet today's medical needs.***

frequenting a health club may keep the body in good functioning order, but it will not help a sick mind. If the mind is full of lust, anger, greed, jealousy, and hatred, one's physical systems will be compromised despite the best nutrition, etc. Therefore we must fulfill the needs of not only the body but also the mind,

#### **Prabhupada**

... continued from page 4.

living entities. Lord Balarama is the Sesa incarnation, and therefore He can save us from angry serpents or envious persons, who are always ready to attack. (SB 6.8.18)

#### **Avoid Food Purchased in the Market**

Your second question, ice cream purchased from the market may not be offered. Because such ice cream contains sometimes undesirable things, which we should not offer. We must offer to Krishna only first class prepared food-

stuff, especially made at home. We shall try to avoid as far as possible goods purchased from the market and offer to Krishna.

(Letter to: Syama — Seattle 21 October, 1968)



*Hope this Meets You  
— in Good Health—*



# My favorite medicines

by Padmanabha dasa

**T**he following nine medicines are remedies I have either successfully used to treat my own ills or have seen work for others. In other words, my assessment is based not only on Ayurvedic principles but also on my own direct experience.

## WATER

Most people think water is "just water." But it's not. It even takes time to digest! Cold water takes 3 *muhurtas* (about 72 minutes) to digest, water that has been heated and then cooled takes 2 *muhurtas* to digest, and water drunk hot takes only 1 *muhurta*.

Now, drinking hot water obviously increases the heat in the body, and therefore hot water is one of the best remedies for kapha or vata disturbances. In other words, if you're suffering from bronchitis or a cold, or simply too much mucus in the body, drinking hot water will help. This treatment is especially good in the evening, when a person suffering a kapha condition have trouble breathing. Drinking hot water at night will also relax the nerves a bit (as hot milk does). The heating and relaxing effects of drinking hot water at night also help those with vata bodies, and drinking hot water will be very helpful in vata conditions such as constipation or flatulence.

Cold water, on the other hand, is especially good for those with a pitta constitution. Such people are prone to suffer excess heat in the body and may contract jaundice or develop stomach ulcers. Regular drinking of cold water will help relieve these conditions. Cold water is also very helpful in mitigating the effects of over-eating, chiefly the discomfort due to excess stomach acid. Drinking cold water in this situation is good for everyone: it will control the excess heat in the stomach and help move the food

down to the next level in the digestive tract. But don't drink cold water until an hour and a half after you've finished eating; any sooner, and you'll extinguish the digestive fire.

Cold water can also help certain eye problems. If your eyes are red all the time or tired from lack of sleep, then you may find some relief by rinsing them with cold water. Never touch the eyes with hot water, however. The eyes are one of the main sitting places for pitta, the fire in the body. So adding fire to the eyes can cause some big disturbances.

## SALT

Salt gets a lot of bad press these days. This is due to scientific research



showing that many people with high blood pressure have too much salt in their bodies. The research is faulty, however, because the sampled group is preselected. In other words, the researchers investigated a group of meat-eaters and found a correlation between high blood pressure and salt.

Of course, it's true that too much salt is connected with high blood pressure, but not in the way the scientists claim. High blood pressure is a pitta condition, so the excessive salt in this case comes not coming from table salt but from the salt that's actually in a person's flesh. So the propaganda against table salt is based on

a false conclusion. Table salt is no danger. If you put too much salt in the food you eat, your body will take only what it needs and flush the rest out.

In fact, you can use salted water to help flush out the body. Drinking a couple of liters of heavily salted warm water on an empty stomach will pull toxins out of the body. And as you will very quickly see, the water doesn't stay in the body very long—at most a couple of hours. If you have an extreme salt deficiency, however, the body will absorb some of that salt.

I more often see a salt deficiency than excess salt. Especially those with vata constitutions (thin, light, dry bodies) need more salt than others. A salt deficiency is connected with the following problems: stiffness, headache, inability to concentrate, slow digestion, stomach gas, and backache. So if you chronically suffer from one or more these problems, you likely have a salt deficiency.

Of course, the modern medical/pharmaceutical conglomerates would much rather have you buy expensive medicines to treat these conditions. Headaches, for example, are very often counteracted with aspirin these days. Aspirin relieves the headache, a vata condition, because it is so extremely sour—so sour that it can cause pitta problems like stomach ulcers. But salt provides is a much milder fire and is even better for vata conditions because it contains the element earth. The earth and fire together help the body hold the moisture, which is important for vatas because they usually have a problem with dryness.

A pinch of salt helps balance the doshas and so can treat any problem (to a certain degree, of course). Once I mentioned this fact in a seminar, and a nurse in attendance said that the fake pills (placebos) that researchers some-



times give patients contain mostly salt. When a patient taking the placebo feels some relief, the doctors attribute it to purely psychological causes: simply because the patient is convinced the pill will help him, he or she feels some improvement. But it appears that the salt-pill placebos may not be actual placebos after all! Interesting . . .

Of course, it's possible to take too much salt. But if you do, then the salt will simply pass through the body, as mentioned above. In the process, the salt will pull a lot of fluids out of the body, so you may suffer some diarrhea. And if you do that for a long time, the body is of course going to get dehydrated. But in general there's no risk of taking too much salt.

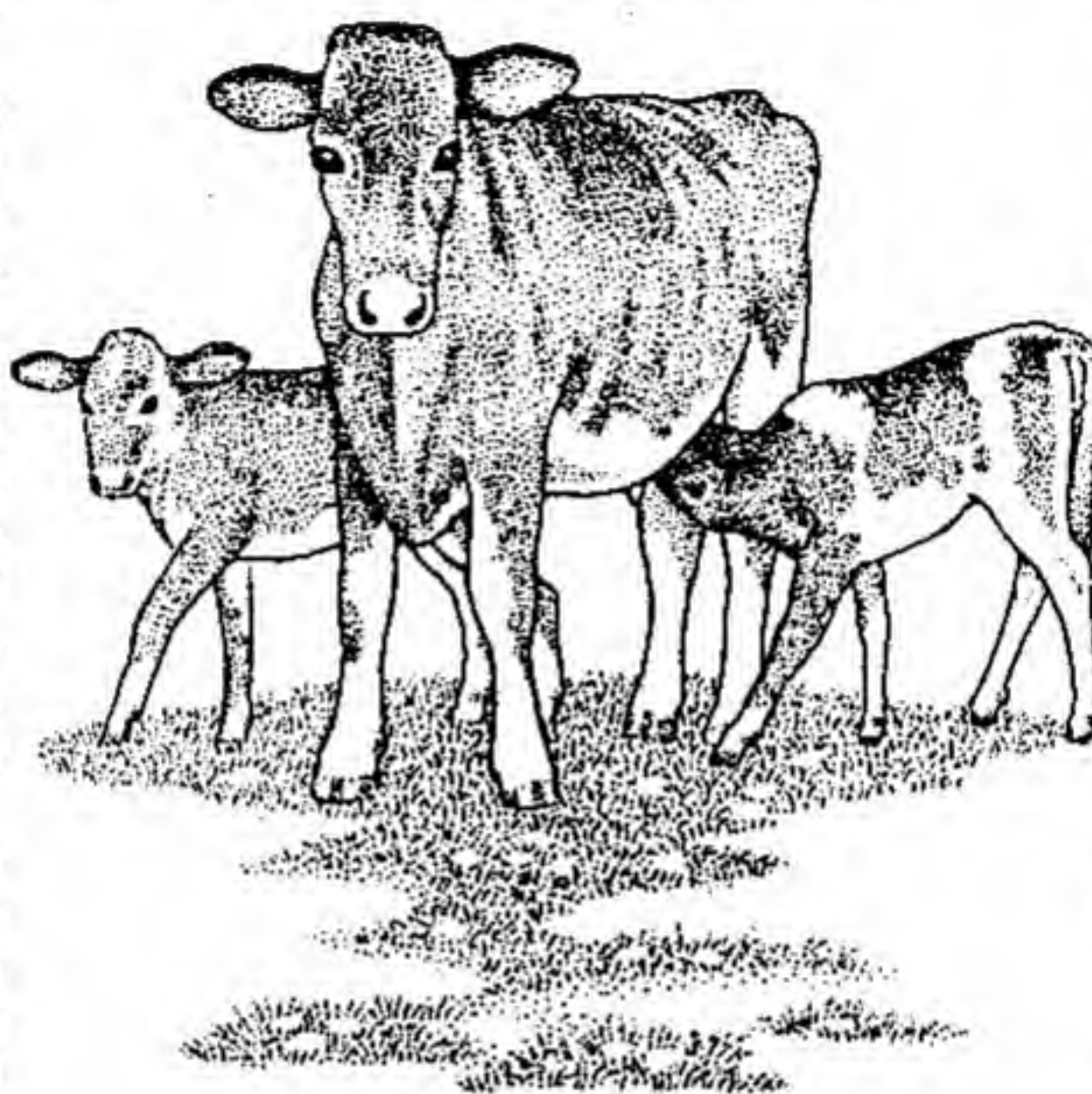
If something tastes too salty, that means the body doesn't want that much salt. If you feel one of the symptoms mentioned above—dizziness, lack of concentration, stiffness, etc.—but are unsure whether you should take some salt to treat it, then just sprinkle a little bit of salt on your tongue. If the saltiness is acceptable, then you know the body wants and needs salt. So you can sprinkle a little more. But generally the best way to take salt is dissolved in warm water.

### BLACK PEPPER

Black pepper is one of my favorite medicines. Because it contains the elements fire and air, it is one of the best remedies for kapha conditions. You'll know what a kapha condition is when you eat too much ice-cream, cake, and other sweets at a festival and your body gets a little bit slow; there's too much mucus in the body, and you just feel sleepy, too heavy. Black pepper will lighten up the body

by destroying the mucus.

The best way to take black pepper for stomach mucus is in the form of peppercorns. They're pretty unpleasant to chew, but chewing them isn't really necessary because they digest nicely. I generally swallow whole peppercorns as if they were pills. If



you're suffering a bad case of excess stomach mucus, pop ten or twelve into your mouth and wash them down with hot water.

*Milk, of course, is something very special.*  
**Ayurvedic literatures describe milk as the best food.**

Another effective way to use black pepper to remedy kapha conditions is inhalation. A hundred years ago people would inhale snuff to counteract the effects of overeating. They would eat a huge, ridiculous feast full of white flour, sugar, meat, alcohol, and other useless things. Then they would go to the opera and begin to fall asleep, their bodies exhausted. At that point they would take out their snuff pouch and inhale a few pinches, irritating the nose and bringing on a fit of sneezing.

Sneezing clears the head and relieves the kapha condition. Finely ground

black pepper is even stronger than snuff for this purpose.

Black pepper is a great friend for kapha bodies, but not for vata and pitta bodies. It dries out the former and overheats the latter, so for them it is not recommended.

### MILK

Milk, of course, is something very special. Ayurvedic literatures describe milk as the best food, and it is such when taken together with something else. When it is taken together with grains, for example, milk is the number-one food. When milk is taken all by itself, however, it is no longer considered a regular food but a rasayana. Rasayanas are herbs or foods that keep the body youthful. So milk is something very special.

There are different ways to use milk. In the West there is a lot of mis-

use, and therefore milk, like salt, has acquired a bad reputation in some quarters. When fresh milk is stored for some time in cold containers, af-

ter a few days it becomes very heavy and very cold and very dif-

ficult to digest. This is the milk that is often connected with allergies or digestive problems or too much mucus in the body. The proper way to take milk is to bring it to a boil first.

Srila Prabhupada told us to boil it three times. Of course, that obviously brings in the heat, the pitta; the milk itself is more kapha—cool and heavy. So by heating the milk we get the pitta, and we also bring the energy in. Then, by pouring the milk from one container to another for a minute or so, we mix the milk with air. This increases the vata, which makes the milk much lighter and easier to digest.

*Hope this Meets You  
 — in Good Health—*



That is the general practice.

Now, those with extremely strong pitta, too much fire in the body, will benefit by taking milk cold. In other words, they will actually benefit from the fact that cold milk becomes heavy and difficult to digest. For kapha and vata persons, however, it is best to take milk hot. To make it even easier to digest, one can add a little cardamom, ginger, or black pepper.

There's one very special combination that is extremely good for kapha conditions. When your lungs are congested, add a little turmeric to about 100 ml of milk and boil for a few seconds. Then take it off the fire and add a little salt. Normally, we should never add salt to milk; it's considered the same as meat. The body will reject this combination by surrounding it with mucus. In this way, mucus will be pulled out of the lungs and the stomach and be passed out in the stool. So drinking hot turmeric-milk with salt is one of the fastest ways to get rid of mucus. It's the best remedy if you feel a cold coming on, because it immediately dries out the body. The results are practically instantaneous. But this is the only time we should add salt to milk.

### YOGURT

Yogurt is very different from milk. Milk we usually take warm, relaxing the nerves, and then after it's in the body it cools down and absorbs energy as it's digested. But yogurt works in just the opposite way. Yogurt we usually take cool or cold; thus it stimulates the nerves right at the beginning, and later on, because it's so sour, it gives fire and supports the digestion. Yogurt actually digests itself, more or less, and therefore everybody can digest it.

However, people who have too much fire—the pittas—don't react well to yogurt. So they should avoid it. But vatas are especially benefited by yogurt because, being sour, it gives some heat, and it is also kapha and pitta. It brings in the sour element,

it's easy to digest, it gives some heat, and it stimulates the digestive organs, but it also has almost as much power as milk itself. So these two things—the energy for digestion and the power—these are missing in the vata condition. Those with vata bodies have too much air, too much motion. Therefore they suffer nervous conditions like Parkinson's disease—too much motion, not enough energy, and not enough power. So for vatas especially, yogurt is the best friend.

Still, we have to be careful: because yogurt is so sour, we should not take it every day. Also, we should always dilute yogurt with something—fruit,



sugar, honey, etc. And we should never eat it at night, because, as we mentioned, it has just the opposite effect of milk. By stimulating the nerves instead of relaxing them, it makes falling asleep difficult, and by heating the body in the middle of the night, it destroys deep sleep. Therefore taking yogurt at night is said to shorten the life span. So we have to be careful. But in general, vatas can tolerate quite a lot of yogurt because it supplies what they're missing—power and digestive energy.

### PEPPERMINT

I especially like peppermint in the form of the oil, which you can buy in any drugstore. It is very good for relieving itching: just apply it to the skin. Peppermint is very special because it immediately gives a lot of heat. There-

fore you will feel a burning sensation when you apply it to your skin. But that burning sensation will very quickly go away and you will feel an extremely cool sensation. This is the double effect of peppermint: first it heats, then it cools. And because it cools, people with too little fire should be careful about taking it internally. But in general, anybody can tolerate peppermint because it has the double effect of cooling and heating. So it is good to take with meals, for example, because it will give a little heat in the beginning but not agitate the pittas. Lemons do the same thing. Because they are so sour, they give heat right away, but after digestion they cool. Therefore, everyone can tolerate lemons. But they are especially good at controlling the fire.

We can also use that fiery side of peppermint. For example, if you are suffering a kapha condition—some bronchitis or mucus in the lungs—add a few drops of peppermint oil to some boiling water and inhale the fumes. You will get some quick relief in the air passages and clean things out a bit.

Because peppermint supplies heat quickly, it is also very good for excess gas, which results when digestion is too slow because of too little fire in the body. Drinking some water with a couple of drops of peppermint will clear that condition up quickly. So for gas we have two remedies: peppermint and salt.

### HONEY

Honey belongs to the kapha group, but it is an exception because it actually destroys kapha. The reason for this is that after honey is digested it has a very strong astringent effect, which means it dries out the body. So when you feel a cold coming on, honey is one of the best remedies.

Ginger tea with honey and lemon relieves many problems, especially the cold. This combination of three ingredients works to balance the three doshas. Because the tea is hot and



pungent, it immediately controls kapha and vata. It later has a cooling effect due to the lemons, and because it gives that extra heat to cause some perspiration, it will purify the pitta. So ginger tea with lemon and honey can help relieve practically every malady.

As we said, honey is very good to counteract kapha, but we have to be very careful of one exception: when one is suffering the condition of *ama*, excess undigested food in the body, honey is counterindicated. Sometimes when we have a bad cold it is more than just a cold, more than just a kapha condition. A cold is simply a condition in which the body is trying to get rid of excess kapha so that it can become lighter and think faster and act faster. Therefore changes in the weather cause a lot of colds, because the body doesn't need so much kapha.

When the temperature suddenly goes down, the body has to arrange a new balance. It doesn't need so much protection against the heat. When the external heat goes down the body has to throw the kapha off in the form of a cold.

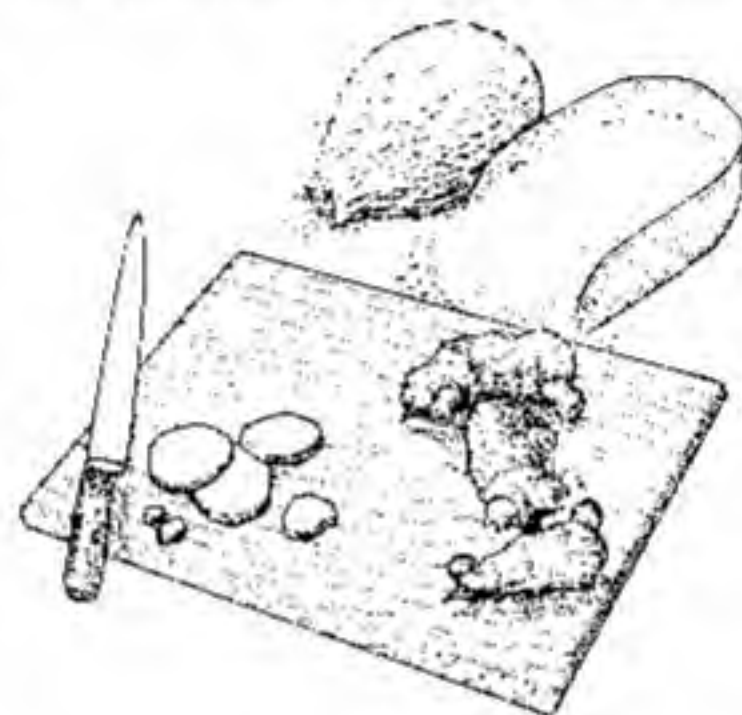
But sometimes it's more than just kapha. Sometimes the kapha is mixed with *ama*, undigested food. *Ama*-mucus is much thicker than normal mucus. It usually has some color to it, as opposed to normal mucus. Normal mucus is very fluid, thin, and colorless. But when it is mixed with *ama* it becomes colored, thick, and sticky. If *ama* is present at the time of a cold, honey is not the right remedy. Then the right thing to do is to go back to step one and take the hot-water treatment and burn off the glue that came about either because the body didn't have enough fire to handle the food coming into it or because we were eating too often and not giving the body enough time to complete the digestive process. Therefore fasting with a lot of fluid, especially hot water, is recommended for an *ama* condition.

The problem with honey in such a

condition is that its astringent effect will force the tissues of the body to contract and hold the gluey *ama*-mucus in. But in general honey is the best remedy for a cold. For kapha in general honey is the best friend—honey and black pepper.

#### TURMERIC

Another of my favorite medicines is turmeric. If you've ever had a feast in India, you've seen that many of the preparations are golden or brown; that's because they're made with turmeric. Turmeric is used very freely in India because of its wonderful qualities. It can adjust the three doshas and



bring them into balance. So in general, you will benefit from using more turmeric in the food you cook.

Hot milk with turmeric will help relieve problems in the joints. One problem is that if the body is too sour the joints become loose. Another is that if the body becomes too dry the joints make a clicking sound when we bend the arms or knees. Both these unpleasant conditions can be alleviated to a great degree by taking turmeric, especially in hot milk, this time without salt.

#### GINGER

Another thing I found effective for many problems is ginger. If one chews something, extracting only the juice and then spitting out the pulp, the excess doshas will go into the pulp and the body will get some relief from whatever ails it. Srila Prabhupada


showed us this principle. He would often eat apples this way, chewing the skin and then spitting it out afterwards. I've had good experience using ginger in this way in connection with my knee problem. It helps if you chew the ginger on the same side as the problem: if the problem is on the left side, chew on the left side; if the problem is on the right side, chew on the right side.

Ginger is very special. In Sanskrit it is called *maha-ausadhi*, "the best of herbs." Ginger obviously belongs to the pitta group because it gives so much fire, but after digestion it works in pretty much the same way that grains do. It builds the body up; it doesn't tear the body down, as do most fiery things.

Black pepper and chili, for instance, destroy kapha and are therefore good against colds and similar maladies, but they tear the body down. But ginger doesn't do that and so can be taken by anybody. We cautioned those with pitta and vata constitutions to be careful of black pepper and chilis because they won't be able to tolerate them, but everyone can tolerate ginger. At first it causes heat, which is obviously good for digestion and good for combating vata or kapha conditions, but after the ginger is digested it provides a kapha effect, like grains.

So ginger balances itself and is therefore beneficial for everyone.

A person with a kapha body should take ginger with honey. The honey will help dry the body out and make it lighter and faster, and it will also provide a little heat, which is beneficial for kaphas. The pitta-bodied person should take ginger with sugar, as in the candy ginger. This will help control the excess fire in the body. And the vata-bodied person should take ginger with salt. We have already praised salt as one of the vatas' best friends.

In this way we can combine ginger with the right ingredient for specific bodies and get some extra punch from this *maha-ausadhi*. 

Hope this Meets You  
— in Good Health—



## Acidosis - The hidden cause of many health problems: How important is Calcium for the body?

by Ugresa dasa

**W**hile modern diseases like cancer, rheumatism, asthma, multiple sclerosis, cardiovascular disease, and chronic fatigue syndrome are killing more than 50 percent of the population in the affluent countries, hardly anyone is aware that the underlying factor of most diseases is a serious but mostly reversible imbalance in the body's metabolism caused by wrong dietary habits and a sedative lifestyle.

### Why does our food have such a great impact on our health?

There is only a very narrow range of parameters within which the body can function in a balanced and healthy way. Wrong diets and lack of exercise make it very difficult—and ultimately impossible—for the body to maintain this balance. A permanent feeling of dis-ease (literally lack of ease) and consequent serious health problems are the price we have to pay for our years of neglect.

### How does the food we eat affect the body?

The natural pH (acidity) of human blood is 7.4. Even slight variations on this standard are fatal. (When the blood pH falls below 7.1 [acidosis] or rises above 8 [alkalosis], no human life is possible) Therefore the body has a few protective mechanisms to neutralize excessive acidity.

One control mechanism is the breath-

ing. As one exhales less carbon dioxide (shallow breathing), more CO<sub>2</sub> accumulates in the blood and turns it into a carbonated (acidic) "soft drink." Excess CO<sub>2</sub> in the blood also causes one to get tired from sleeping longer than required.

### Acidic blood

Acidic blood is more viscous than normal blood and has a harder time flowing through the tiny blood vessels called capillaries. The body's tissues then become starved for oxygen and other nutrients, which can result in heart attacks and strokes; these calamities are the consequent punishment for those who are too stupid or too lazy to choose appropriate foods.

The Nobel laureate Prof. Warburg concluded after extensive research that cancer also results from acidosis of the body's tissues. This makes sense once you realize that all the environmental toxins, chemical pharmaceuticals, artificial food additives, agricultural chemicals, etc., that are all known or suspected carcinogens have a sour reaction in the body, which produces acidosis.

### Uric acid and the kidneys

Phosphorus and sulfur (present especially in proteins) produce acids, while minerals like calcium, potassium, magnesium, and sodium produce alkaline solutions. The excess consumption of proteins—especially meat and dairy

products—which is common nowadays, is one of the main causes of over-acidity and all modern diseases.

Excess proteins are broken down into uric acid. The body can handle only 2% of uric acid. If there is more in the body, it attacks the fine filter canals of the kidneys, and in self-defense the kidneys must excrete more water than normal. With this water the body loses valuable minerals, which are so badly needed to neutralize the acids that started the problem in the beginning.

The body turns some of the acids into:

- \* sweat and fat acids on the skin
- \* some of the excess leaves through the urine
- \* some of the excess leaves through the breath
- \* stomach acid
- \* milk acid in the intestine
- \* some is stored in the tissues, causing arthritis, rheumatism, neuralgia, cancer etc.

### Beware of 'Purines'

Purines are a group of organic compounds derived from or structurally related to purine, including uric acid, caffeine, and the nucleic acid constituents adenine and guanine.

Some foods contain a lot of purines. Purines are broken down into harmful uric acid in the body and should be avoided or reduced. Everything with more than 100mg of purines should be avoided or taken only occasionally.

The close relation of methylxanthines, such as caffeine, and theobromine to purines is another reason why the such foods as coffee, tea, cocoa, and chocolate are very unhealthy. (Please see table 1., left)

Yeast is very high in purines. Never take brewers' yeast for nutritional purposes but only nutritional yeast, and that in small quantities if taken regularly. Brew-

Table 1.

Purine content of foodstuffs	
<i>meat extract</i>	3000 mg
<i>meat</i>	250 mg
<i>all fish, sea fruits/foods, organs</i>	100 - 1000 mg
<i>black tea</i>	2800 mg
<i>cafe, cacao powder</i>	1100 - 1900 mg (Watch out for chocolate)
<i>lentils and dry peas</i>	150 mg*
<i>products from white flour</i>	140 mg
<i>pastry with or without eggs</i>	150 - 180 mg
<i>cooked spinach</i>	70 mg
*The purines of legumes are destroyed if you let them sprout for two to three days.	



ers' yeast is *tamasic* because it is skimmed off the top of the beer in breweries.

#### **Your teeth and bones pay for your sweet soda pops**

Consuming more acids than can be excreted by the body drastically lowers our quality of life. At a certain point the

***" . . . Indian farmers and simple workers – Their strong and shining white teeth are more beautiful than the computer-corrected ones from the models who harass us from every billboard to buy the latest nonsense."***

body starts to neutralize the fatal acids with alkaline minerals to guarantee survival! The necessary minerals are taken in the form of calcium from the teeth and bones and in the form of potassium and magnesium from the intracellular liquid.

This reduction in minerals manifests the following symptoms, which many of us have experienced: The predominant symptom of calcium taken from the teeth is visible in the rampant tooth decay plaguing affluent nations. Eighty percent of the children in primary school suffer tooth decay.

Neither our fancy toothbrushes with this month's technology, our super-protective-"hyper-fluor"-extra-bacteriostatic-new-flavored-300-percent-more-content toothpaste, nor our expensive dental clinics can keep the body from taking what it needs—the calcium in our teeth. It needs the calcium in our teeth to neutralize the deadly acids from sweets, tea, chocolate, soft drinks, meat, medicines (chemical drugs), artificial fertilizers, and or putrefactive acids created by hopelessly and indiscriminately overburdened digestion systems.

#### **Don't Africans need toothbrushes?**

Have you ever seen the pictures of happy smiling African or Indian farm-

ers and simple workers? Their strong and shining white teeth are more beautiful than the computer-corrected ones from the models who harass us from every billboard to buy the latest nonsense.

How is it that the simple African farmers, who don't take any vitamin and mineral supplements, don't brush their teeth three times a day (they clean their teeth simply with a soft twig or their fingers, or not at all), and don't even know what a dentist is, have perfect teeth without any cavities practically their whole lives?

If the body can't get enough from the teeth, it starts to use the calcium from our bone mass, and this results in osteoporosis, or loss of bone density. High protein diets cause mineral loss and acidosis.

The minimal amount of protein you should have in your diet is around five per cent. Potatoes are 11 per cent protein, spinach is 49 per cent protein, oatmeal is 15 per cent protein, oranges are eight per cent protein. Therefore, it is virtually impossible to not get enough protein, unless you are eating only sugar.

Excess dietary protein is a major cause of osteoporosis. Adding calcium to the diet has no effect on bone loss. Milk and milk products are high in protein and therefore do not reduce the risk or the rate of bone loss in osteoporosis.

#### **Boron deficiencies and the consequences**

Recent studies by the USDA indicate that boron is now considered an essential nutrient. The U.S. Department of Agriculture also reported that post-menopausal women supplementing their diet with 3 mg of boron for eight days lost 40 percent less calcium, one-third less magnesium, and slightly less phosphorous through their urine. It has remarkable effects on the body in conserving calcium and preventing bone demineralization, and is effective with the older population and the prevention of osteoporosis.

The deficiency of boron, selenium, and chromium in our diets is a major problem created by modern industrial farming methods. It may be difficult to

accept and also take some time to understand, but nowadays even the fresh vegetables in the supermarkets can kill us after a lifelong struggle with painful diseases by not supplying what the body needs (e.g., boron) and supplying what it does not need (e.g., cadmium).

#### **Drinking water and calcium**

The body's calcium metabolism also solves the mystery about the minerals in the drinking water.

Although steam-distilled water and purified water from reverse osmosis units is very pure and healthy, and there are many examples of people drinking it for decades, most people depend on the calcium and magnesium from their drinking and cooking water to neutralize the acids produced by their improper diets. For them, exclusive and prolonged consumption of demineralized water might be detrimental to their health.

#### **Can the minerals in the drinking water be assimilated?**

We often hear the argument that the minerals in drinking water cannot be assimilated by the body because they are inorganic.

The truth is that the minerals in water are in their molecular form as electro-

***The truth is that the minerals in water are in their molecular form as electrolytes, making them easier to assimilate than the organically bound (chelated) minerals in food.***

lytes, making them easier to assimilate than the organically bound (chelated) minerals in food.

The organic calcium found in sesame seeds (almost 2 % calcium), millet, and MODERATE quantities of milk products are much more suitable.

#### **Further symptoms of calcium loss from acidosis:**

Brittle hair and finger nails.

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The loss of intracellular potassium and magnesium that acidosis causes can kill the most sensitive of all cells—the hair-producing cells. Because they are so sensitive, they are always the first cells to die when poisons like radiation or the chemicals used in chemotherapy are applied to the body.

The effect is partial or complete hair loss. Premature hair loss can also be caused by hormone changes due to an artificial life-style, but it can often be stopped by stopping acidosis.

### **Overeating, eating too often, and eating indigestible food can cause acidosis**

All bodily digestive fluids, from saliva to bile to pancreatic fluids, are alkaline.

\* The body can produce enough digestive fluids to digest only 2/3 of what the normal stomach can hold. If we eat more than this, the food will remain partially undigested and start to putrefy, sometimes while it is still in the stomach but at the latest when it is in the intestine. In this way, even alkaline food will produce large amounts of harmful acids and poisonous methyl alcohol, which causes autointoxication.

Eating only raw vegetables overburdens the digestion and causes the above-mentioned problems. The optimal amount of uncooked food is some 25 percent in the form of salads, sprouts, and fruits.

To carefully chew one carrot or some other raw vegetable daily is a good method to add fiber to the diet, but excess raw food causes indigestion and even, in people following extreme raw food diets, the same red nose that alcoholics have, from the alcohols.

\*\* Stomach acid is only for killing the bacteria and for iron absorption, not for digestion. The pancreatic and bile enzymes are injected into the duodenum (a 20-cm-long part of the intestine be-

tween the stomach and the small intestine).

The alkaline digestion enzymes neutralize the sour stomach acids. The stomach acid is produced from the chlorine in the salt, and the sodium of the salt is used to create alkaline sodium bicarbonate, thus ultimately creating a pH equilibrium in the body.

This is why all warm-blooded animals, including humans, need more sodium chloride than other salts. You'll often find animals going to great lengths to get salt; for example you'll find elephants climbing high onto mountains to get some salt from a cave. But the high salt consumption that is popular today is unhealthy and causes many circulatory problems.

Eating too often will cause the body to constantly produce valuable alkaline digestive fluids; these will then be eliminated through excrement and become unavailable to help maintain the proper pH balance in the body.

### **Typical Symptoms of acidosis**

- \* handicapped regenerating ability, thus being prone to infection
- \* chronic lack of energy, easily fatigued, feeling cold
- \* depressive and aggressive mood, restlessness
- \* insomnia, weak concentration and memory
- \* sensitivity of teeth, especially

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- against acids and cold
- \* cavities, gingivitis, and caries
- \* dull-gray hair, hair loss
- \* dry and dull skin, rashes, skin impurities, eczema
- \* soft, brittle, split, grooved, or thick nails
- \* muscle spasms, gout, and sciatica

attacks

- \* rheumatism and arterial inflammation, neuralgia
- \* irritation while urinating, sour urine
- \* sour perspiration, stomach and mouth smell

### **Intestinal problems:**

- \* constipation
- \* diarrhea
- \* frothy stools
- \* stomach gas
- \* continuous mucus production of the bronchia and sinuses
- \* too low blood pressure
- \* blood pressure changes and thyroid problems

### **Intervertebral disc problems**

Intervertebral disk problems are caused by uric acid crystals between the disks.

### **A simple test for acidosis**

The pH of the saliva is 7.1. Even after one eats a lemon, the saliva should get back to this value within minutes. If not, the body has insufficient minerals to buffer the acids.

Please see the list of Alkaline and Sour-reacting foods (on facing page.)

### **Alkaline foods:**

The higher the number, the more alkaline the food. The alkaline effect is caused by the presence of various alkaline-reacting minerals, such as potassium, calcium, and magnesium.

### **Sour-reacting foods:**

The higher the number, the more sour the food. The sour effect is caused by the presence of various sour-reacting nonmetal elements, such as phosphorus and sulfur, as well as by complex molecular substances, such as purines.

✻



**Table 2.**

<b>ALKALINE FOODS</b>	
<p><b>Vegetables</b>  cucumber 30  red beets leaves 25  algae, spirulina 20-25  black radish 23  chestnut 20  dill, parsley 20  dandelion 20  kohlrabi leaves 18  raw spinach 15  red beet 11  carrot 10  avocado 10</p> <p><b>Sprouts</b>  chickpea 40  alfalfa 30  wheat, barley grass 23  kernel, sunflower, pumpkin 15  soy or mung beans 15  beans, peas, lentils 10-15  cereals 5-10  nuts 5-10  almonds, peanuts 5-10</p>	
<p>Swiss chard (Mangold) 8  carob 8  white radish 7  potato 7  lettuce 1-7  kohlrabi 6  peas, beans fresh 5  cress 5  coked spinach 3  Jerusalem artichoke (Topinampur), pumpkin 2  paprika 2  fresh olives 35</p> <p><b>Fruits</b>  papaya, green and yellow 20  figs 20  raisins 20  rose hips 15</p>	
<p><b>pH neutral</b>  unheated raw milk 0  cream 0  butter from cream 0  whole buckwheat 0  spelt (Dinkel) and millet 0  safflower and olive oil 0</p>	
<p><b>Sour-reacting foods:</b></p> <p><b>Grains</b>  barley grits 20  polished rice 18  rye flour 16  wheat flower (rancid) 15  rye 11  packed oat flakes 10  natural rice (17%) 10  wheat 8  cooked corn 5  oats cooked whole 8</p> <p><b>Nonvegetarian (very sour)</b>  meat extract 50  meat, poultry 20-25  chicken egg, cooked 25  fish 15-20</p>	
<p><b>Miscellaneous</b>  brewers yeast 50  melted cheese 20  \$\$quark[[?]] 17  lentils, peas, cooked 15  walnuts, peanuts 15  roasted nuts and seeds 10-20  fresh cheese, pasteurized 10  white beans 10  sour milk products 3-6  linseed and sesame oils 2-4</p>	



# Kitchen Cleanliness

by Kurma dasa

**W**hile teaching Sanatana dharma, Lord Caitanya described twenty-six qualities of a Vaisnava. A devotee of Krsna, he said, is clean, *suci*. Everything about a devotee, inside and outside, should be clean—his mind, heart, intelligence, body, clothes, living place, place of work, place of worship, and his personal and business dealings.

## Two types of Personal Cleanliness

Personal cleanliness can be divided into two types—internal and external. Srila Prabhupada once explained that “simply if we take bath with soap outside, and inside all rubbish things, that is not cleanliness.” Cleanliness, he explained, means *bahyabhyantara*. *Bahya* means outside, and *abhyantara* means inside.

Internal cleanliness can be cultivated by rising early, attending the morning program (beginning with seeing the Deity at mangalārati), chanting sixteen rounds minimum every day while avoiding offenses, studying Srila Prabhupada’s books, eating only Krsna-prasadam, and most importantly, following the four regulative principles.

## External Cleanliness

As far as external cleanliness is concerned, Srila Prabhupada, while instruct-

ing his disciples in establishing the first Iskcon school in 1972, spoke of something quite revolutionary.

“The future preachers of the Krsna consciousness movement must learn to

ing they can wash their own cloth. Your country, America, will become so much degraded, but they will appreciate if we are revolutionary clean.”

The standard of cleanliness that Srila

Prabhupada wanted us to establish in our daily lives was the standard of brahminical life, and for untrained Westerners, this was certainly something revolutionary.

My first understanding of just how clean Prabhupada wanted us to be came in February of 1973. Prabhupada had given me my second initiation one year previously and had told me that now I should learn to possess the qualities of a brahmana as mentioned in the eighteenth chapter of the Bhagavad-gita; he said that I should take bath at least twice a day to maintain external cleanliness. I was worshipping

the small Deities of Radha and Krsna and cooking daily in the kitchen of our very cramped, ten-room converted terrace-house temple in Melbourne’s sleazy St. Kilda district. Prabhupada had just arrived for his second visit to Melbourne.

We were particularly ecstatic because Prabhupada’s servant and his secretary, Srutakirti and Bali-mardana respectively,



be *suci*, absolutely pure in all respects, and for this, practical cleansing is the basic teaching, e.g., not touching anything dirty to the mouth. . . . Water itself is more antiseptic, so soap is not always required. The boys should be taught to wash their own dishes, hands, mouth—that means always washing. They should be given what they will eat, so that nothing is left over, and while bath-



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had, under Prabhupada’s watchful supervision, carried with them on the plane large beautiful marble Deities of Radha and Krsna, who would be installed in a few days.

The day before the proposed installation ceremony, Srila Prabhupada sent Bali-mardana down to the kitchen for an inspection, and he didn’t like what he saw. Bali-mardana spoke disapprovingly of its poor and dirty condition. He was especially concerned that the pots had a large accumulation of black on their bottoms. “How can the new Deities be installed tomorrow,” he said, “with the kitchen so dirty?” He reported his findings to Srila Prabhupada.

We were shocked, especially since we thought that the kitchen was quite clean. Looking back, of course, it was as Bali-mardana had described it—very dirty. After a successful lecture at Melbourne’s Palais Theatre that night, Prabhupada returned and took some hot milk. Bali-mardana came down to the kitchen and broke the grave news. “Prabhupada,” said Bali-mardana, “will not go ahead with the installation tomorrow unless the kitchen is thoroughly cleaned.” We rallied for an all-night cleaning marathon.

But the Deity installation was still in doubt. Bali-mardana had also informed Prabhupada that there were insufficient brahmanas available to perform the daily worship. That night, all the kitchen fittings were removed, dismantled, and fully cleansed, the walls scrubbed, scraped, and repainted. By early morning the kitchen had been totally transformed. Bali-mardana gave a final inspection and, albeit reluctantly, gave his

permission for the installation.

Although we thought that Srila Prabhupada was being strict, in fact he was very lenient. He had written to Bhadra dasi in 1971 and pointed out that in India the system was that the kitchen should not even be in the same building as the living quarters because the living quarters are contaminated. Of course, since so many ISKCON temples, like our Melbourne temple, were not “custom-built” but rather transformed buildings, we had to make do with the facilities we had.

In the same letter to Bhadra dasi, Prabhupada touched on other “sensitive” issues for cooks. Cooking pots, he said, were supposed to be thrown out after each cooking. Since disposable clay pots were not a practical item in the West, Prabhupada explained, then the highest standard of cleanliness must be applied to cookware. In this connection Prabhupada wrote:

“In Bombay even the poorest man is clean. I have been to a Parsee kitchen. So nasty, all the pots are black, nothing is clean. For eating they use china—clean or unclean cannot be understood. Even our pots, handled by our European devotees, underneath it is black. You should not even be able to see a black spot. It is not clean. A single black spot and it is not clean.”

Prabhupada related to Pusta Krsna how strict his mother had been in his childhood days. She would check each and every utensil to see if there was any spot of dirt.

“The maidservant had to surrender. Examine. Then it is no spot. Then it is finished. Otherwise she has to do again.

Everything should be neat and clean. The kitchen should be ... washed twice daily, opened nicely and smeared with water and gobar. And if you see the kitchen, immediately you’ll feel comfortable. It is very cleanly prepared, then offered to the Deity. Then you take. Automatically your mind becomes cleansed.”

Prabhupada also explained that if a waterpot was clean, then naturally one would like to drink out of it. And he recalled how in his school days the seats were so clean that “you liked to sit down.”

“Cleanliness is next to godliness” is not just a homely proverb, but a fact. The verse *sri-vigraharadhana-nitya-nana-smgara-tan-mandira-marjanadau* confirms this. The spiritual master and his disciples cleanse the temple as a regular daily function. Prabhupada would often chastise his unclean disciples for their neglect of basic standards of cleanliness. “Want of cleanliness,” Prabhupada explained, “means laziness. If you are lazy, you can’t keep clean. Let me sleep for the time being. This is the mode of ignorance, tamoguna. We have to conquer over tamoguna. *Sattvam-visuddham vasudeva-sabditam.*”

Since everything that is prepared in temple kitchens is offered to the Deity, then naturally the kitchen must be as clean as the Deity room. The high standard of cleanliness in worshipping the Deity in the temple indicates the worshiper’s devotion. Caitanya-caritamṛta gives the account of Raghava Pandita, who went to great trouble to offer very clean coconuts to Lord Krsna



in the temple. If there was the slightest discrepancy, Raghava Pandita would not consider the coconut suitable for offering to the Lord.

Srila Prabhupada has cited Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura as saying that Raghava Pandita "was not simply a crazy fellow suffering from

***Prabhupada once criticized a devotee for being in the habit of touching her feet to items that were both clean and sacred. The devotee replied "I might as well cut my feet off," and Prabhupada said, "Yes."***

some cleansing phobia. Rather, he was an eternal servant of the Lord, who, out of pure devotion, wanted to make the best and cleanest offering of worship to the Lord. Srila Prabhupada encouraged us that when we are cleaning the paraphernalia of the Deity (like the cooking pots), then we are actually cleansing our hearts."

Cleanliness, then, is the topmost and over-riding principle in all kitchen affairs. Prabhupada told devotees on several occasions that "Krsna doesn't need a nice offering. He appreciates the sincere endeavor. A clean kitchen is more important than a nice offering. If the kitchen is clean and maintained nicely, then the offering will be nice. If the offering is so-called nice, but the temple is not cleansed, then Krsna does not like that offering."

Naturally this means that not only the floors, benches, walls, and equipment in the devotee's kitchen must be clean, but also the heart and mind of the devotee-cook also. It is quite conceivable that one could be in bad consciousness and still have a so-called clean kitchen. I've seen some spotlessly clean kitchens in nondevotee establishments, but undoubtedly the consciousness of the

cooks who worked there were fixed on many things other than Krishna's lotus feet.

#### **Consciousness of the Cook**

The consciousness of the cook must be as crystal-clear as his kitchen. In this way, not only will Lord Krishna like to accept the offering, but also those who taste the remnants of the offering will be infused with the Krishna consciousness of the cook. Therefore, Prabhupada wanted that only brahmana-initiated disciples do the cooking in ISKCON kitchens. "Others," he said, "can assist."

In order to assist in the high standard of cleanliness expected in a devotee's kitchen, those supplying the kitchen with equipment should select the highest quality materials as can be afforded. This means that stainless steel cookware is always preferred over aluminum. A devotee told me that she heard Prabhupada once say that aluminum "was not fit to pass stool in." Cooking and Deity worship go hand in hand. In the same way that the pujaris bathe before entering the Deity room, the cook should take full bath before entering the kitchen. Unless one puts on clean, uncontaminated cloth after his bath, then he is like the elephant who takes bath and then goes back on the land and rolls in the dust. "Don't roll in the dust of wearing dirty clothes after showering," Prabhupada said.

#### **Kitchen Paraphernalia Respected**

What to speak of kitchen equipment, all paraphernalia used in the service of the Deity should be treated with great respect. Prabhupada once criticized a devotee for being in the habit of touching her feet to items that were both clean and sacred. The devotee replied "I might as well cut my feet off," and Prabhupada said, "Yes."

When a devotee asked Srila Prabhupada in Boston in 1971, "While we are cooking in the kitchen, if we touch our clothing, should we wash our hands?" His Divine Grace answered, "If the clothing is clean, you don't have to wash your hands. If the clothing is dirty, you should not even be in the kitchen."

In Dallas and Edinburgh, the devotees complained that there were rodents in the kitchen, and asked if they should be killed. Srila Prabhupada said, "No, you should be killed, because you have taken a vow of cleanliness and have not kept that vow."

#### **Practical Points**

Finally, some practical points. Clean as you cook. All pots and utensils should be washed as they are used or straight after. Prabhupada said, "Half the cooking is cleaning." If footwear has to be worn in the kitchen at all, then it should be strictly used only in the kitchen.

Offered food, if at all possible, should never return to the kitchen in which it was prepared. In other words, unoffered bhoga should not come in contact with prasadam. And, if both offered and unoffered foods must share the same

***The consciousness of the cook must be as crystal-clear as his kitchen. In this way, not only will Lord Krishna like to accept the offering, but also those who taste the remnants of the offering will be infused with the Krishna consciousness of the cook."***

refrigerator, then clearly marked areas should be set aside for each.

Kitchen cleanliness is essential in our war against maya. If we prepare sumptuous offerings with a clean heart in a spotlessly clean kitchen, then the prasadam will be a potent blessing to help whoever partakes of it to advance steadily in life, purify the body and mind, and create fine brain tissue to always think of Krsna and never forget him.



# Vastu Shastra

## Harmonious Home Designs

by Raga Manjari devi dasi

**W**ith the benefits of Feng Shui becoming evident it's ancient Indian counterpart, Vastu Shastra is also emerging in a world-wide revival. Hailed as a highly effective architectural science promoting health, happiness and prosperity, we explore it's practical applications in the home.

### Happy House Karma

"When we see our actions and our dwellings as hymns to the universe, then we cannot help but build with joy and beauty houses that are truly creations of love."

- John Archer, author of *The Home Building Experience*.

The instinctive human drive to create a comfortable dwelling provides for our need to retreat from the pressures of society, reflect and get strength to go out and face the continuing challenges of the outside world. The feeling of being "home sweet home" enables us to maintain a balance between our inner world and our interaction with the external environment. People without a secure, happy dwelling have been shown to suffer adverse psychological and physical effects. This is supported by recent statistics stating that the homeless in Britain die an average of 25

years earlier than the average British citizen.

Whether you are paying off your own place, renting or in the process of searching for that 'dream home', awareness of the principles of Vastu Shastra will ensure that you won't waste your hard earned money on a residence that attracts negative influences into your life. Have you ever experienced a flood of difficulties after moving into a new home? Poverty, sickness, relationship conflicts, career problems and mental disturbances are just a few of the obstacles that can develop if a home lacks harmonious design and construction. A home or block of land may appear ideal yet it could bring misery to the owner if it transgresses the basic precepts of Vastu Shastra. Alternatively, residing in a home which is aligned with Vastu Shastra principles is said to encourage positive growth and circumstances in our lives.

### What is Vastu Shastra?

"The true basis for the more serious study of the art of architecture lies with those more humble indigenous buildings everywhere. Functions are truthfully conceived and rendered invariably with a natural feeling. Results are often beautiful and always instinctive."

- Frank Lloyd Wright, architect

In response to the increasing demand for more ecologically sensitive and healthy housing, modern architects are now drawing on ancient architectural traditions such as Vastu Shastra in order to create contemporary buildings based on thousands of years of empirical wisdom.

Vastu means dwelling or environment and Shastra translates as science or system. The art of living in harmony with the environment and attracting the most positive influences into a living structure is the concern of Vastu Shastra. It combines architectural and design principles with a synergy of engineering, art, astrology and astronomy. Houses, hotels, offices and temples constructed according to Vastu principles are most prevalent today in the South Indian states of Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Prominent businesses and hotel chains such as the Taj group are employing Vastu architects to create constructions that will attract good fortune and prosperity. Prominent Vastu master, V. Ganapati Sthapati has noted that many structures in Central America's Mayan villages, Tibet, Burma, Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia have striking similarities to Vastu architecture. Vastu Shastra has two main branches, the design and



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construction of temples (Deva Shilpa) and that of all other types of buildings (Maanav Shilpa). This article outlines the primary architectural principles relevant to residential buildings.

#### Foundation of Vastu Shastra

Common to all Indian sciences is the concept that the cosmos is composed of the five great elements namely ether, air, fire, water and earth. These elements interact in the microcosm of the human body and the macrocosm of the universe according to the energising flow of the spirit. Just as the body utilises these five elements to maintain life, Vastu Shastra views a building as a living organism with its own life force that when properly constructed acts as a receptor for the benefit and harmonious interaction of these five elements. The flow of the five elements through a house carries positive energy, sustaining life and imbuing the residents with a deep sense of peace and vitality. In contrast, a building that traps a chaotic interaction of elements is said to bring disease and misfortune to the residents. Vastu Shastra recognises that humans are also influenced by planets, spiritual forces, magnetic and gravitational fields. By calculating these respective influences it ascertains the ideal site, construction, interior design and rituals to observe in order to create a structure in perfect resonance with the environment and residents.

#### Ancient Origins

"We are told that our contemporary built environment must reflect the 'spirit of the age'. But what concerns me most is

that we are succeeding in creating an age without spirit."

-HRH Prince Charles.

The architectural science of Vastu Shastra is outlined in the Sthapatya Veda which is a section of the Atharva Veda, a 5,000 year old Indian scripture. In accordance with all ancient cultures, Vastu asserts that the landscape possesses a sacred spirituality which must not be exploited but rather honoured and respected as a divine gift. Gratitude for the spiritual and physical support provided by the earth gives rise to a natural environmental sensitivity.

There is a legend in the Indian epic Matsya Purana describing that Vastu was a god born from the sweat of Lord Shiva. Vastu is said to lie on the Earth on a grid of 64 or 81 squares with his head in the north-east and feet in the south-west which is known as Vastu Mandalam. The Hindu demigod of creation Brahma, proclaimed that whoever constructs buildings on Earth shall first make offerings to Vastu in order to invoke his blessings for a dwelling that will bring all health and harmony. Different gods also preside over their respective designated directions, which influence the way that area of a building and plot is to be utilised.

(See Table 1 : The Eight Directions)

#### SELECTING THE PERFECT PLOT Shape

The ideal block of land is square with all sides equal length and each corner at a 90 degree angle. The second best option is a rectangular plot with a ratio of width to length not exceeding 1:2. An

octagonal shaped block or a cow-faced area are the only other shapes that should be considered for good luck and fortune. Any extensions on a block are best projecting in the north-east direction. Circular areas are acceptable for round buildings only. Pyramid and circular shapes are said to concentrate too much energy in a given area, creating a highly charged environment that makes it difficult to relax. Irregular shaped blocks are said to contribute to mental and physical illness, relationship conflicts, loss of fortune and create obstacles to progress.

C. Ravicandran in his thesis on Diffusion Studies poses a scientific logic for this shape preference. He states that atoms fill a given space and they tend to move in a straight line which is best facilitated by a square or rectangular shape. If the space is an irregular shape the atoms will move in a chaotic and irregular fashion, creating disharmony in that area. The kinetic energy in a square or rectangular room is ordered and flowing, creating a more positive environment for the inhabitants.

#### Direction of House

North east is considered the most important direction in Vastu. Jupiter, a lucky influence, presides over this area and the supreme spirit symbolically resides here. Apart from these more ethereal considerations, the east brings the sun's beneficial ultraviolet light in the morning and the north is aligned with the magnetic flow of the Earth, creating an easy flow of energy through the house.

Considering this, the ideal block of

Table 1: The Eight Directions

Direction	God	Planet
1. East	Indra - Demigod of weather	Sun - Light, consciousness, intelligence
2. West	Varuna - Demigod of water	Saturn - Longevity, property, obstruction
3. North	Vishnu - Supreme God	Mercury - Intellect, conscience, vocation
4. South	Yama - Demigod of death	Mars - Energy, logic, friends, enmity
5. North-east	Brahma - Demigod of creation	Jupiter - Teacher, husband, duty, wealth
6. South-east	Agni - Demigod of fire	Venus - Beauty, wife, comfort, charm
7. South-west	Durga - Goddess of destruction	Rahu - Disease, collective bad karma
8. North-west	Vayu - Demigod of wind	Moon - Personality, social life, emotions



land will facilitate the house to face north east. That is not to say that all other land should be dismissed. Vastu also says that certain directions are suited for people according to their vocation. A block of land allowing the house to face east is positive for teachers, healers, monks or nuns and scholars, facing north is good for politicians, tradespeople and administrators, facing

***“The golden rule of Vastu is to keep the north, east and north-east lower in all levels and less loaded at any moment of construction as compared to other sides. This ensures a positive flow of energy through the house.”***

south is suitable for those in primary produce industries and land facing west is recommended for tradespeople.

#### **Slope**

“The golden rule of Vastu is to keep the north, east and north-east lower in all levels and less loaded at any moment of construction as compared to other sides. This ensures a positive flow of energy through the house.”

- Professor V.V. Raman, Vastu scholar.

The land gently sloping from an elevated south and west to a gradually declining east and north is said to contribute to the success of the occupants. This can relate again to capturing the advantages of the morning sun in the east and the magnetic energies from the north. One can create this slope easily on a flat block of land by adding the appropriate quantity of soil.

#### **Gardens**

Gardens are sanctuaries where we can revitalise and effortlessly connect with nature's harmonious ecosystem. The natural bounties and beauty of a garden are said to permeate through to all levels of the residents lives. Gardens provide

privacy, frame views and offer shelter from the sun, wind and noise. Vastu encourages simple yet sustainable plant cultivation methods similar to permaculture to bestow the household with health, pleasure and peace. Plants create fresh air by absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen as well as fragrances that encourage us to breathe more deeply. Larger trees are to be positioned so that they allow the house to receive morning sunshine and shade in the afternoon. In practical terms this generally means that the larger trees are planted at the south and west sides of the house rather than in the east or north. Plants that are considered good luck include the fig, mango, jackfruit, banana, coconut, neem, basil, turmeric, ginger, coriander, water lotuses, roses, jasmine, sandalwood, frangipani and ashoka tree. Beautiful fragrant flowers are essential for daily spiritual rituals as well as for decoration of the house and ladies hair.

Hills or mountains on the eastern and western sides of the land can pose a negative influence on the household. Conversely, land with hills or mountains on the south or north sides are considered fortunate.

Vastu warns against the cultivation of poisonous and thorny trees near the house. The cultivation of a medicinal and culinary herb garden for maintaining health and adding flavour to meals is a common addition to Vastu gardens. Vegetables and fruits are grown to ensure a secure level of self sufficiency.

#### **Soil Quality**

To ascertain the quality of the soil one can employ the skills of a professional soil surveyor or one can conduct some simple Vastu tests:

1. Dig a hole with measurements 1m long x 1m wide x 1m deep.
2. Fill up the trench with water and when the water becomes still float a flower in the centre. If the flower rotates in a clockwise direction that indicates that positive energy pervades the land. If the flower rotates anti-clockwise this isn't considered a good omen.
3. After waiting at least twelve hours if the pit still retains some water and

hasn't developed cracks this indicates that the soil is very high quality.

4. fill up the pit with the previously excavated earth. if there is excess soil remaining this is a sign that the land will bring prosperity. If there is insufficient soil to fill the pit this says that the land will not support abundance and when there is just enough soil the occupants will enjoy a healthy balance.

It's also a good idea to sow some seeds to note how quickly they germinate. The faster they germination the more fertile the soil. The greenery on neighbouring properties will also give you a fair idea of the region's soil quality.

#### **Water**

Water imbibes a property with a sense of reflective calm and invigorating vitality. The negative ions generated by nearby running water flow through a house, purifying and ventilating the atmosphere.

A river or sea on the north side with the water flowing west to east or water on the east side flowing from west to south is said to promote mental, physical and spiritual rejuvenation in Vastu Shastra. The negatively ionised air rejuvenates the whole body,

***Vastu encourages simple yet sustainable plant cultivation methods similar to permaculture to bestow the household with health, pleasure and peace.***

especially the nervous and respiratory systems.

Swimming pools, wells or lakes are ideally located at the mid-point of east and north-east. It is considered bad Vastu to have water exactly at the north-east junction.

#### **Neighbouring Land and Buildings**

Living adjacent to a cemetery or main

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***“In Vastu Shastra the main entrance door to a house is worshipable. Powders of red kum-kum, turmeric, sandalwood, mango leaves and fragrant flowers decorate the main door threshold to invoke the blessings of the gods and any guests. Every morning the first household task for many South Indian wives is to wash and decorate the entry porch with beautiful elaborate mandala style designs called rangolis (or kolams). The rangoli designs attract and focus positive energy into the house.”***

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road is not recommended in Vastu. Land situated between two larger blocks of land owned by others may attract poverty according to Vastu. Mental disturbances may be exacerbated by the presence of higher buildings in the north-east side of the land whereas higher buildings in the south or west sides are said to bring good luck.

#### **Roads**

Land with roads on all four sides is known as “Sumangai” meaning very auspicious. Obviously if the roads are very busy this isn’t a good situation with the pollutants and hazards posed to small children. Land with roads on the east or north side of the building are also praised. A house located at the end of a cul-de-sac is said to block future progress in the lives of the inhabitants.

#### **Position of House on Plot**

The ideal location of a house on the land is either in the south-west corner or positioned centrally with an equal area of land around the house.

#### **ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS**

##### **Fences, Gates and Doors**

The only guidelines given in Vastu concerning fences is that if they are irregular in height or width the taller and wider areas should be in the south or west side and never the east or north sides.

There are many different locations advised for gates according to the direction of the surrounding roads, however, a general rule is that gates to enter the property are best on the east, north or north-east sides. The side where the main entrance gate is to be placed can be divided into nine areas. To avoid misfortune and encourage

abundance and happiness, the gate should be placed in the area governed by Mercury (4), Jupiter (5) or Venus (6). The same applies when allocating a place for the front door.

In Vastu Shastra the main entrance door to a house is worshipable. Powders of red kum-kum, turmeric, sandalwood, mango leaves and fragrant flowers decorate the main door threshold to invoke the blessings of the gods and any guests. Every morning the first household task for many South Indian wives is to wash and decorate the entry porch with beautiful elaborate mandala style designs called rangolis (or kolams). The rangoli designs attract and focus positive energy into the house employing intricate use of swirling lines, dots and motifs such as plants, flowers, gods, shells and sanskrit mantras. Traditionally different flours such as rice and chickpea flour were used to create these designs but today coloured chalks are generally used. In order to obtain the beneficial influence of each planet the following grains can be used in the rangoli design:

Sun - Wheat  
Moon - White rice  
Mars - Red split peas  
Mercury - Mung dal  
Jupiter - Chickpeas  
Venus - Lima beans  
Saturn - Sesame seeds  
Rahu - Urad dal  
Ketu - Horse gram

(See enclosed photos of Grain and Chalk Rangolis)

The number of stairs can be odd numbers that when divided by three the

remainder is always two. Numbers such as 11, 17 and 28 fit this criteria if they are spiral they should move upwards in a clockwise direction.

#### **Room Plan**

(See Diagram 5: Sample Room Plan)

##### **Courtyard**

The word for paradise is derived from the Persian pairidaeza meaning enclosed garden in the centre of a building, the ancient concept of an atrium. Vastu Shastra designates this area for family gatherings and spiritual rituals.

##### **Living Room**

The central south wall is the allocated place for rest and recreation.

##### **Kitchen**

When designing the kitchen the primary concerns are to maintain a high standard of cleanliness, provide a large area for food preparation and ensure the safety of the cook. The south-east corner of the house, being governed by Agni - the demigod of fire, is the ideal area for the kitchen. The sink and taps are best located at the north-east corner while cooking and eating utensils are to be kept in the south or south-west. Electrical appliances are placed in the south-east corner. The fridge is ideally positioned in the north-west area. The stove and oven is placed at the east or north wall, not touching the south or west walls. Cooking whilst facing east is considered the best arrangement. Traditionally, in order to maintain cleanliness, eating was never undertaken in the kitchen.

Kitchen benchtops were traditionally made of marble or stone. Toxic pollutants such as chemically treated materials, chemical cleaning agents and residue



from improper heat combustion should be avoided. Good ventilation and cooking equipment are high priority. Compost and recycling bins can be easily incorporated into the kitchen layout.

(See diagram 6: Map of Kitchen)

### Bedrooms

Considering most people spend up to one third of their lives in bed the relative harmony of this room has an important impact on our lives. Since the south is governed by Mars (ruler of the husband) the main bedrooms are to be assigned to the south, west or south-west areas whereas a bedroom in the north-west can be kept as a guest room.

For the most rejuvenating sleep Vastu says that ideally one should have the head pointing east. Sleeping with the head to the north repels the earth's north pole causing nightmares, disturbed and restless sleep. The wife sleeps on the left side of her husband as the right side represents masculine energy and the left side symbolises feminine energy.

Your spine should form a shallow 'S'

***The Supreme creator is said to preside over the north-east region of a house hence making it the most conducive area of the house to receive spiritual blessings and guidance. Meditation, spiritual rituals and exercise routines can be done in this area particularly in the morning facing north-east.***

shape with a healthy mattress, the pillow supporting the nape of your neck. An osteopath or physiotherapist can recommend the ideal bedding for you.

Avoid sleeping over running streams or near electrical currents. The bed should not touch the east or north walls. A bookshelf or reading desk is ideally

placed at the south-west or west side of the bedroom.

### Dinning Room

The dinning room is situated in the mid west direction, governed by Saturn, a planet that helps us to maintain positive eating habits.

### Study

Located on the south west region one can study facing north, east or north-east in order to facilitate learning.

### Bathrooms

Traditionally bathrooms were always outside in India. They were on the eastern side of the house so in the early morning after bathing people could exit the bathroom and immediately pay their respects to the sun rising in the east. Vastu masters still recommend the bathroom be located in the eastern area with the bath, pipes, and shower placed in the north-east area of the room, the sink at the west and cupboards in the south-east. To keep the damp environment of the bathroom healthy and safe non-slip clay tiles are used on the floors and extractor fans along with plants such as ferns help to absorb the moisture.

### Dressing Room/Valuables Storage

The goddess of wealth, Lakshmi (wife of Vishnu), governs the north side of the house making it the ideal area for keeping a safe and valuables. Storing valuables in this area keeps them protected and also acts to attract more abundance into your life.

### Store Room and Garage

The south-west is the best area to place heavy objects such as a staircase, car and house maintenance equipment.

### Attic or a Vertical Extension

An attic, loft or another story on the house can be placed in the south or west area of the house or level in all directions. The northern or eastern areas should not be made higher than other directions according to Vastu.

### Meditation or prayer room

The Supreme creator is said to preside

over the north-east region of a house hence making it the most conducive area of the house to receive spiritual blessings and guidance. Meditation, spiritual rituals and exercise routines can

***Most Vastu houses that I visited exude a calm ambience and simple elegance that comes from the uncluttered spaces and surfaces. The subtle smell of incense and fresh spices created a welcoming and relaxing mood.***

he done in this area particularly in the morning facing north-east. Medicine was traditionally kept in the northern room next to the prayer room.

### Pet shelter

Animals can be kept at the north west area of the house.

### INTERIOR DECORATING

The way we decorate our houses reflects our personality and expresses our individual creativity. The modern trend to employ an interior decorator to decorate the house according to the latest Vogue Living or furniture catalogue displays creates an impersonal mood, stripping the house of our own instinctive flavour and creativity.

Our choice of fabrics, colour, scents, materials and art imbues the house with a personal sense of harmony and integration that helps us to feel happy and healthy.

Most Vastu houses that I visited exude a calm ambience and simple elegance that comes from the uncluttered spaces and surfaces. The subtle smell of incense and fresh spices created a welcoming and relaxing mood. The art work often depicts happy scenes that create a positive and joyful feeling in the observer.

As art critic Philip Rawson explains "art is an imaginative experience which

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must extend our mental horizons". However, Vastu advises against the display of scenes that will put us in a negative frame of mind. Art depicting war scenes, fights, black magic, giants, demons, weeping or depressed people, poverty, grief, terror, natural disasters, or any misfortune are discouraged.

***"Life is never made comfortable by artificial needs and means but by plain living and high thinking"***

Stuffed animals are also said to bring bad fortune.

#### **Sick Building Syndrome**

"Life is never made comfortable by artificial needs and means but by plain living and high thinking"

-Sri Prabhupada, Saint and Vedic scholar.

Technological advances have introduced a wave of harmful building, electronic and decorating materials into the home over the past fifty years. The accumulation of chemical vapours, synthetic building materials and electromagnetic fields combined with poor ventilation and artificial lighting are creating the modern phenomenon known as "sick building syndrome". These hidden chemicals, synthetic materials and electromagnetic fields in the home are being linked to an increase in conditions including asthma, eczema, chronic fatigue, insomnia and hyperactivity.

Before building your home or moving into a new home try to avoid the following three dangers.

1. Gases and vapours;
2. Particles;
3. Radiation and electromagnetic fields.

#### **GASES and VAPOURS**

##### **1. Radon**

Natural inert gas present in certain geological regions carried into the house by dust, natural gas or water.

##### **2. Ozone**

Poisonous gas generated by the

earth, photocopiers and certain appliances.

##### **3. Carbon monoxide, nitric oxide and carbon dioxide**

Formed from incomplete combustion of gas flames from cookers. Carbon monoxide is also from vehicle exhausts.

##### **4. Organochlorins**

These include polychlorinated biphenyls, polyvinyl chloride (plastic), turpentine, ammonia, acetone, naphthalene (in moth balls), chlorine (in bleach), phenols (in plastics, cleaning agents, synthetic resins), chloroform and chloramines (both present in household cleaning products). Lindane, pentachlorophenol and tributyl tin oxide are toxic pesticides and fungicides used to preserve timbers.

##### **5. Formaldehyde**

Used to bond timber and plastics as well as a preservative for paper and textiles. Also present in combustion of heating appliances and tobacco.

#### **Side Effects**

1. Damage to lung tissue, linked to cancer.
2. Irritates mucous membranes
3. Respiratory, nervous and circulatory system disorders. First signs of toxicity may include nausea, headaches, dizziness and breathlessness.
4. Potentially carcinogenic, irritate all mucous membranes, headaches, nausea, mood changes. Linked to skin, respiratory and nervous system disorders
5. Irritates mucous membranes leading to allergies, headache, hay-fever, nosebleeds and is a suspected carcinogen.

#### **Coping Strategies**

As far as possible avoid using paraffin and bottled gas heaters. Prefer gas burners which can be vented to the outside and have sealed combustion chambers. Allow good ventilation around heaters and cookers. Contact the local health and safety authorities or an Air Quality Consultant to assess the level of radon, carbon monoxide and ozone in the region. Avoid the use of toxic varnishes, resin binders, fungicides, insecticides, paints, stainers, adhesives, plasters and

plastics in the construction.

#### **Particles**

##### **1. Asbestos**

Fibrous material previously used for insulation and fireproofing.

##### **2. Metals**

Aluminium (from cookware), copper (from water pipes), lead (in old water pipes) and cadmium (paints).

**3. Fungi, bacteria, moulds, dust, dust mites and miscellaneous microorganisms** Air conditioning and poor cleanliness

**4. Synthetic fabrics, feathers, hair and down** Bedding, carpets, animals and upholstery

#### **Side Effects**

1. Asbestosis and cancer
2. Toxic levels of these metals are linked to chronic fatigue syndrome, neuro-muscular disorders, alzheimers as well as a vast variety of illnesses.
3. Allergies and infections
4. Allergies, asthma and irritability

#### **Coping Strategies**

These toxins are generally a problem when you are moving into an established property. Asbestos, lead pipes, cadmium paint and any other dangerous material must be removed by special contractors, attempting to remove it yourself poses some very serious health hazards. Air conditioning should be

***As far as possible avoid using paraffin and bottled gas heaters. Prefer gas burners which can be vented to the outside and have sealed combustion chambers***

checked, cleaned and maintained. Try to implement natural ventilation alternatives. Remove synthetic fabrics, hair, feathers and down if there are side effects of hypersensitivity. It is better to replace carpets with wood, tiles, marble or slate. Curtains can be replaced with blinds or louvres. Fit bedding with dust mite protective covers. Wooden slat mattress bases are preferable to



spring base beds.

Try to fit cupboards and wardrobes that reach from the floor to the ceiling with no cracks or gaps for micro organisms to breed. Wall paper traps dust and encourages mould, paint is the preferred option. To eliminate dust mites wash all bed linen in temperatures over 55 degrees.

The first line of defence against air-borne allergens is to keep your house scrupulously clean and well ventilated. Employ an Environmental Assessor to check the levels of chemicals, fungi, bacteria, moulds, dust and toxic vapours in the air and water. This will give you an idea as to the water filter you may need and the microorganisms that need to be eliminated.

## **RADIATION and ELECTROMAGNETIC FIELDS**

### **1. Radiation**

Exposure is generally from a natural source such as radon or radium bearing building materials like earth, stone, pumice, granite, concrete, bricks, alum shale, calcium silicate slag and uranium. Proximity to a nuclear power station will often cause higher levels of radiation.

### **2. Microwave ovens**

Radiation can leak from poorly sealed microwaves.

### **3. Ultra violet**

Fluorescent light fittings may contain toxic PCB's ( polychlorinated biphenyls). Fluorescent lights also radiate higher electromagnetic fields than other light sources. Glass shields us from levels of UV- A and UV- B but

***The first line of defence against air-borne allergens is to keep your house scrupulously clean and well ventilated.***

windows, doors or skylights made from plastics such as polycarbonate and acrylics do not filter out UV radiation.

### **4. Electromagnetic fields**

These emanate from the earth and from electrically charged technology. The earth's natural electromagnetic field pulses at a rate of 783 beats per second

and is a healthy influence on humans. It has been observed that when astronauts were in space and deprived of the earth's electromagnetic field they would become mentally confused and physically disorientated. Although these fields are beneficial some West German scientists warn that staying for many hours over a conjunction of these currents (lay lines) or on areas of raised energy such as over fault lines or underground streams can lead to 'geopathic stress', a syndrome that they are linking to an increased rate of many diseases including cancer. Electrical appliances and wiring is mounting in our technology mad society, creating a layer of electronic smog that is blocking the beneficial effect of the earth's natural electromagnetic waves in the atmosphere. The unnatural electromagnetic fields created from all electrical appliances such as visual display units, alarm clocks, sound systems, lights and all wiring generally pulse from 50-60 cycles per second and are detrimental in ways that are only now becoming evident.

### **Side Effects**

1. Increased risk of cancer
2. Presently investigating possible link with leukemia
3. Skin cancer, headaches, eyestrain, irritability, fatigue, weakness and tinnitus
4. Symptoms of 'electrostress' may include increased risk of cancer and leukemia, high blood pressure, insomnia, nausea, headaches, irritability and other psychological disturbances.

### **Coping Strategies**

Levels and sources of radon and radium can be assessed and if the levels are high, measures should be taken to seal the sources of contamination, increase natural ventilation, install radon detectors and monitor levels regularly.

Microwaves should be checked for leaks and consider adopting other cooking methods. Halogen or incandescent lamps can be used in preference to fluorescent lights. To reduce exposure to ultraviolet light use glass and keep the house protected from

the noon and afternoon sun.

To block the flow of electromagnetic energy flowing into the house through power sockets install shielded cable or conduits. You may also like to switch off the main fuse box at night, or use 'demand switches' that allow certain

***Be careful not to sleep on the confluence of the earths electromagnetic currents or over running water, avoid electric blankets and use battery operated alarm clocks and radios. Turn off the electricity while sleeping.***

appliances such as the fridge to stay on.

Install an anti-radiation glare screen on your computer screen, sit at least 6 feet away from the television and install a negative ioniser while maintaining good ventilation in the rooms where there are a lot of electrical appliances.

Be careful not to sleep on the confluence of the earths electromagnetic currents or over running water, avoid electric blankets and use battery operated alarm clocks and radios. Turn off the electricity while sleeping.

### **Building Materials**

Building materials used in traditional ethnic architecture are now being considered by modern architects in order to solve old problems of the environment, climate and the home. Since Vastu Shastra considers the house to be a living organism unto itself much like a third skin, it should be constructed from natural, breathing materials such as wood or earth to ensure the preservation of the life of the building and its inhabitants.

The materials should match the following criteria:

- Free from chemical pollutants, radioactive energy and harmful electromagnetic energy resistant to bacteria, viruses, moulds, termites and other harmful microorganisms.
- Provide protection from excessive

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***Employing the guidance of a Vedic astrologer (jyotish) is a good investment for a home builder. Vastu Shastra outline certain times that are very auspicious to lay the foundation stone, commence and complete construction. If commencement of building is supported by a positive alignment of the planets, Vastu experts claim that the house is assured of a stable, durable and fortunate future. Malefic planetary alignments can mark difficulties in construction and future problems.***

light, heat, cold, wind, water and sound.  
 -Doesn't conduct static electricity.  
 -Available in abundance and renewable.  
 -Durable, long lasting and easy to maintain and repair.

The most commonly used materials in Vastu Shastra are earth and wood since they can fit the above criteria if carefully selected and prepared.

Wood is a direct gift from nature that brings the breath of life to a house, Wood can endure for thousands of years and often grows more attractive with age. Timber absorbs carbon dioxide and doesn't require the use of chemicals in its production. With the global deforestation crisis it is always best to use locally grown plantation timbers or at least be sure that the timber is from new growth forest rather from old growth or rainforest. The following timbers can be obtained from plantations and are hardy building material- Cypress Pine (*Callitris* spp.), Radiata Pine (*Pinus radiata*), Hoop pine (*Aracaria cunninghamii*), Poplar (*Populus* spp.), Blackbutt (*Eucalyptus pilularis* spp.), Sydney Blue Gum (*Eucalyptus saligna* sm.), Spotted Gum (*Eucalyptus citriodora* e. *maculata*), Mana Gum (*Eucalyptus uiminalis*), Rose Gum (*Eucalyptis grandis*), Jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*), Red Ironbark (*Eucalyptus Sideroxylon*) and Silvertop Stringybark (*Eucalyptus leavopinia*). Oak was used in Vastu buildings because of its strength, durability, impermeability, resistance to moulds and insects and stains to a beautiful rich hue. Be aware that most commercial woods are chemically treated. An alternative treatment is to use a borax wood impregnation treatment, resin oil or Beech wood distillate to protect the wood against moulds and termites.

The recent revival in mud bricks is a viable option considering that some of the oldest surviving colonies of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece and Italy were constructed from mud bricks. Mud bricks once properly fired are simple to construct, accessible, durable, renewable, effective insulators, low cost, rot and termite proof.

#### **Commencing and Completing Construction**

Employing the guidance of a Vedic astrologer (jyotish) is a good investment for a home builder. Vastu Shastra outline certain times that are very auspicious to lay the foundation stone, commence and complete construction. If commencement of building is supported by a positive alignment of the planets, Vastu experts claim that the house is assured of a stable, durable and fortunate future. Malefic planetary alignments can mark difficulties in construction and future problems.

The foundation stone laying ceremony is to be at the north-east then the stone is taken to the south-west where construction actually begins. A Hindu priest traditionally performs ceremonies called Vastu Poojan and Navgrah Homam where certain precious stones, metals and grains are placed on the land to ensure the blessings of the gods in the venture.

Once the construction work is complete, a traditional house warming celebration occurs known as Griha Pravesh. Here the blessings of the gods are once again invoked and all those involved in the construction of the house are given presents and a feast in gratitude.

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## News from Around the World

### 4 OF 10 PEOPLE USE ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE IN THE UNITED STATES

*Americans spent \$27 billion out-of-pocket for alternative therapies in 1997*

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Four out of 10 Americans used alternative medicine therapies in 1997; total visits to alternative medicine practitioners increased by almost 50 percent from 1990 and exceeded the visits to all U.S. primary care physicians.

Americans paid an estimated \$21.2 billion for services provided by alternative medicine practitioners, according to an article in the November 11 issue of *The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*, a theme issue on alternative medicine.

David M. Eisenberg, M.D., of Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston, and colleagues surveyed 2,055 adults by telephone in 1997 to study trends in alternative medicine use in the United States.

They compared the 1997 data with results from their similar 1990 telephone survey of 1,539 adults. Dr. Eisenberg presented the findings of the study at an American Medical Association media briefing on alternative medicine here today.

The study reports that between 1990 and 1997, the prevalence of alternative medicine increased by 25 percent, with the total number of visits increasing by 47 percent from an estimated 427 million in 1990 to 629 million in 1997—exceeding total visits to all primary care physicians in the United States (386 million in 1997).

During this same period, expenditures for alternative medicine professional services increased by 45 percent. Expenses for these services, conservatively estimated at \$21.2 billion, \$12.2 billion of which were out-of-pocket, exceeded out-of-pocket expenses for all hospitalizations in 1997.

The researchers surveyed adults on the use of 16 alternative therapies,

which included relaxation techniques, herbal medicine, massage, chiropractic, spiritual healing by others, megavitamins, self-help, imagery, commercial diet, folk, lifestyle diet, energy healing, homeopathy, hypnosis, bio-feedback and acupuncture.

They report that in both the 1990 and 1997 surveys, alternative medicine was used most frequently for chronic conditions, including back and neck problems, anxiety, arthritis and headaches. The use of at least one of 16 alternative therapies increased from 33.8 percent in 1990 to 42.1 percent in 1997.

The therapies that saw the largest increase in usage included herbal medicine, massage, megavitamins, self-help groups, folk remedies, energy healing and homeopathy.

### STUDY LINKS CANCER TO CHRONIC DEPRESSION

Newsday

WASHINGTON—Studies have linked chronic depression to heart disease and a long list of medical maladies, and now federal researchers have found a possible addition to the risk list: cancer.

Brenda Penninx and her colleagues at the National Institute on Aging have been involved with a large epidemiological study of the elderly and found that people who reported symptoms of depression each of the three times they were interviewed over a six-year period were almost twice as likely to have a subsequent diagnosis of cancer as the nondepressed among them.

"These were people (who were) chronically depressed," said Penninx, a visiting scientist from the Netherlands who works at the federal institute twice a year. "When you are depressed for a long period of time, it changes the chemical processes in the body."

Depression is the most common psychiatric illness, affecting 20 percent of people at some point in their lifetime. But chronic depression is less common and probably disables 3 to 5 percent of

the population. These people experience prolonged sadness, tiredness, weight disturbances, and an unrelenting hopelessness.

The federal researchers suspect that depression alters immune system functioning and that those changes can affect the growth of cancer cells. But it is too early in the investigation to really know why and how depression increases risk.

The researchers studied 5,000 elderly people in four communities throughout the United States.

Between 1982 and 1988, scientists conducted personal interviews and administered screening questionnaires designed to pick up depression. Three percent of those interviewed had signs of moderate to severe depression throughout the six-year testing period.

Penninx and her colleagues found that people with chronic depression had almost twice the rate of cancer as those with acute depression or no depression at all.

The finding was still solid after the investigators accounted for history of smoking, drinking, and antidepressant use. None of the 5,000 people who entered the study in 1982 had any evidence of cancer.

### AYURVEDIC HOSPITAL IN INDIA

Often time devotees ask about Ayurvedic clinic in India. Just for those interested the Kottakkal Arya Vaidya Shala, Kerala had branches in Mumbai. It is a ayurvedic health spa which offers massages, some ayurvedic products and some beauty, hair and rejuvenation therapies.

The rate for the massage and treatment range from Rs. 750 (general massage) to Rs 35000 (complete 25 day course of a variety of treatment). The consultation fee is Rs 500.

The Mumbai telephone no is: 022 - 630-2605/022 - 820-4309.

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## DIET AND CANCER LINK FOUND

By Patricia Reaney

LONDON (Reuters) - Experts are discovering overwhelming evidence that what you eat is crucial in helping to reduce the risk of cancer, doctors said Friday.

They advised more fruit, vegetables and fiber and a reduced alcohol intake, as well as stopping smoking, losing weight and exercising more.

"It's a consistent message and the more work that is done, the more consistent it becomes," Dr John Cummings said in a telephone interview.

"If you change your diet in particular ways you will reduce your risk of cancer," the nutritionist at the MRC Dunn Clinical Nutrition Center in Cambridge added.

In a clinical review published in The British Medical Journal, Cummings and his colleague Sheila Bingham assessed major reports about diet and cancer and the latest evidence linking the two.

"We're trying to get people to really take it on board. It is just getting stronger and stronger. There is more evidence now, genetic evidence and from physiological studies of a cancer-causing mechanism. All these things put together still point to diet being crucially important."

Apart from lung cancer, which is mainly caused by smoking, diet is the most important lifestyle factor in up to 80 percent of the other three diseases.

"Diet is the major identifiable risk factor that you can change in these cancers," Cummings added. "The evidence points to these being very much related to diet."

Cancer usually results from one or more mutations in DNA, the coded set of instructions that control the behavior of cells. The mutations can be inherited or acquired during life.

Animal studies have shown how elements in cooked meat are carcinogens, or cancer causing agents, in the mammary gland and colon of rodents. Meat and alcohol are associated with increased risk of breast cancer, the leading cause of cancer deaths among women in many countries.

But the researchers said the diet link is strongest in colon cancer. Meat is

likely to raise the odds of bowel cancer by producing carcinogens called heterocyclic amines and it also increases the amount and type of residue that enters the large bowel.

"Alcohol is a significant risk factor for upper gastrointestinal cancer, liver cancer and breast cancers," the scientists said in the study.

They emphasized the protective properties of fresh fruit and vegetables and said there was no evidence that vitamin supplements help to reduce cancer. Some studies of smokers have shown that beta-carotene supplements could even be harmful.

## GLOBAL HEALTH AND TRENDS 1955-2025

### Population

- The global population was 2.8 billion in 1955 and is 5.8 billion now. It will increase by nearly 80 million people a year to reach about 8 billion by the year 2025.

- In 1955, 68% of the global population lived in rural areas and 32% in urban areas. In 1995 the ratio was 55% rural and 45% urban; by 2025 it will be 41% rural and 59% urban.

- Every day in 1997, about 365 000 babies were born, and about 140 000 people died, giving a natural increase of about 220 000 people a day.

### Leading causes of global deaths:

- In 1997, of a global total of 52.2 million deaths, 17.3 million were due to infectious and parasitic diseases; 15.3 million were due to circulatory diseases; 6.2 million were due to cancer; 2.9 million were due to respiratory diseases, mainly chronic obstructive pulmonary disease; and 3.6 million were due to perinatal conditions.

- Leading causes of death from infectious diseases were acute lower respiratory infections (3.7 million), tuberculosis (2.9 million), diarrhoea (2.5 million), HIV/AIDS (2.3 million) and malaria (1.5-2.7 million).

- Most deaths from circulatory diseases were coronary heart disease (7.2 million), cerebrovascular disease (4.6 million), other heart diseases (3 million).

- Leading causes of death from cancers were those of the lung (1.1 million), stomach (765 000), colon and rectum (525 000) liver, (505 000), and breast (385 000).

For whole text see:

<http://www.who.ch/whr/1998/facts.htm>

## COMMON PAIN RELIEVER CAN CAUSE LIVER DAMAGE

DALLAS, TX. — October 16, 1997 — High doses of acetaminophen, especially when mixed with alcohol, caused liver injury in some patients, reported researchers at the University of Texas-Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas in this week's edition of The New England Journal of Medicine.

Yes, it is well known (call any local poison control center) that acetaminophen (e.g. "Tylenol") has a very narrow margin of safety. What this means is that even a dosage as low as 3 times the recommended amount can lead to liver damage (in the absence of alcohol).

It is not uncommon for children to accidentally overdose on this drug, because it is so commonly available in medicine cabinets around the world. Please keep it out of their reach.

As a suicide drug; yes it works, but dying from liver failure is extremely painful and not very fast (max blood plasma levels are not reached for 4 hours post ingestion and it usually takes about 17 hrs before any real irreversible damage is done).

If you overdose, call an ambulance right away. If you do not have immediate access to medical help - take charcoal (probably not from your BBQ - but the medically prepared variety - not a bad thing to keep at home, if possible). It absorbs the drug and renders it inactive much better than inducing vomiting would. This is what any poison control hotline would tell you.



**ERGONOMICS: FOCUS ON  
COMPUTER-RELATED EYESTRAIN**  
by David Wolff (dwolff@iastate.edu)

If you suffer from eyestrain resulting from working at a computer, you are not alone. Surveys indicate that 70 to 75 percent of persons using computers regularly report some type of eyestrain. Dr. James Sheedy, a clinical professor of optometry at the University of California at Berkeley, has ranked the most frequent vision and vision-related symptoms reported by computer users:

- o Eyestrain (sore or fatigued eyes)
- o Headache
- o Blurred near vision
- o Slowness to focus eyes (near to far and far to near)
- o Blurred distance vision
- o Sensitivity to bright light (glare)
- o Eye irritation (burning, dryness)
- o Contact lens discomfort
- o Neck and shoulder pain
- o Back pain

Effectively combating these problems requires a three-part approach: have your vision assessed, examine your visual work environment, and listen to what your body is telling you.

**Vision Assessment**

Determine whether your vision is satisfactory given the amount of time you spend computing. The American Optometric Association and the American Academy of Ophthalmology have concluded that the additional visual demands of computer use may mean that some individuals who would normally not need glasses should have correction for their computer work.

A large study of more than 600 computer users and 600 controls (non-computer users) found that the typical office worker had better than 20/20 vision at the start of the study period; even so, many small visual defects were identified by optometrists carrying out the study.

The importance of identifying and correcting these small visual defects in computer users is frequently stressed in scientific and lay literature. If you

experience computer-related eyestrain and decide to have your vision tested, tell your optometrist about your work environment (glare, distance to monitor, monitor height relative to your eyes, etc.) and request a comprehensive examination to check for slight visual defects that could degrade performance and comfort at your computer.

**Examination of Your Work Environment**

Listed below are just a few of the many factors to consider in designing or modifying a workspace to improve computer vision. Keep in mind that workstation "improvements" may have unintended consequences. For example, lowering the computer monitor is often recommended but may increase reflected screen glare for some users.

**Monitor Position.** Optometrist James Sheedy recommends that computer monitors be 20-28 inches from the user's eyes and that the monitor should be four to nine inches below the eyes. To reduce musculoskeletal strain, strive to center the monitor and keyboard directly in front of the typical seated position.

**Lighting.** Electronic offices need only approximately one-third the light of traditional paper-based offices (something ISU computer-lab users may be aware of). While lower light levels are great for computing, they may not be satisfactory for reading books and other paper media, especially with readers' increasing age. In fact, the amount of light required to read print material increases two- to three-fold for a person at 60 versus 20 years of age. Regardless of one's age, however, task lighting is recommended for reading print in low light environments.

If your office has too much light you may be able to:

- o Remove half of the lamps in fixtures
- o Use blinds or shades on windows
- o Place your monitor at right angles relative to bright light sources
- o Add an anti-glare screen (if other glare reduction options are not

available)

**Listening to Your Body**

When at the computer, listen to what your body is telling you. If your eyes are tired and/or sore, take a break. Close your eyes for a moment. For the next break, look off into the distance (distance viewing allows the focusing and convergence muscles of the eye to relax). We tend to blink less when computing than we do during other activities so frequent, conscious blinking is recommended. To reduce repetitive stress injuries, short (1-2 minute) breaks every 10-15 minutes are encouraged (rather than longer less frequent breaks). These breaks can include stretching and massage and can be combined with vision breaks for maximum benefit.

If your neck and/or shoulders become sore, ask yourself why. If reference documents are flat on the work surface, a copy holder will allow a more comfortable, upright seated posture. If you cradle a phone between ear and shoulder, switch to holding the phone in your hand or invest in a telephone headset.

If your low back is sore, sit back in your chair. If you find it necessary to lean forward to optimize computer work, your vision may not be adequate for your work load and visual environment. If your seat pan is too long to allow your back to reach the chair backrest, invest in a back support (cushion).

If current trends continue, we will be spending more time at our computers both at home and at work. Take a moment now to consider which computer tasks are essential and which are not. For example, e-mailing a friend in another country rather than phoning may make economic sense, however, e-mailing (vs. phoning) a coworker about a complex subject may be a poor use of time and will only exacerbate any computer-related discomfort.

Computer users are encouraged to stop taking their vision status and visual environments for granted. Comfort and productivity are likely to improve with increased awareness of workplace eyestrain factors.